EXCLUSIVE: MIKE WILDS Q&A

THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT

MOTORSPORT NEWS

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Motorsport's super-sub tackles the MN readers' questions page 14

Champion gifts victory at the second race of the season to rampaging Verstappen and Red Bull

HAMILTON PLEDGES TO FIGHT BACK AFTER IMOLA SLIP-UP

Max Verstappen barges into lead

By Matt James

World champion Lewis Hamilton has promised to bounce back after a rare mistake at the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix at Imola on Sunday meant he slid off the track.

The Mercedes driver, who finished second behind Red Bull's Max Verstappen, slipped off the road in the treacherous conditions halfway through the race while lapping traffic.

He regained the circuit and went on to reclaim runners-up spot after battling ahead of the impressive McLaren of Lando Norris. Hamilton maintains his lead in the championship by a single point as he set the fastest lap of the red-flagged race.

Hamilton was left ruing a mistake

Hamilton said: "I'm just grateful I could get going again and get back into the race. It's not how you fall; it's how you get up. I definitely didn't know I would be [on the podium] when I was facing that barrier."

Full story, page 4

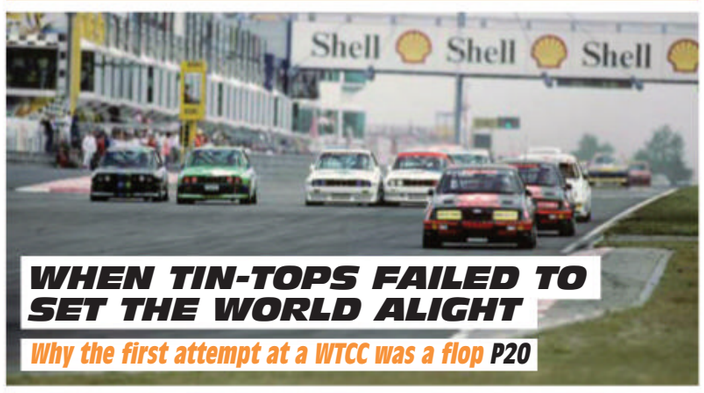
THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT MOTORSPORT NEWS

FEATURE

TF SPORT'S READY TO TAKE ON THE WORLD IN '21

Insight into the rise of UK's leading GT squad P18

RETRO



WHEN TIN-TOPS FAILED TO SET THE WORLD ALIGHT

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HOW THIS IS TEAM HARD'S MOST IMPORTANT SEASON

Kent team's Spanish armada ready to set sail P24

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COMMENT

Photo: Motorsport Images. Toyota Gazoo Racing, Gary Hawkins, Jakob Ebrey

Third place for Norris was a career best and points to great things to come for the Brit

A REAL TALENT TO ADMIRE

Formula 1 fans were served up a treat on Sunday, when rain sprinkled itself all over the Imola circuit and threw strategies out of the window for every competitor. Much credit must go to Max Verstappen for steering a path through to victory in his Red Bull-Honda.

The result, and the manner in which is was executed, means that the prospects for the 2021 season look very good indeed. As Lewis Hamilton has been saying for a while, it was about time Mercedes had some proper on-track competition. It certainly seems to have some this year and the battles that he and Verstappen will enjoy in the races to come are mouth-watering.

It was only a rare mistake from Hamilton that stopped the race being even closer in Italy, but that mistake gave another Briton, Lando Norris, the chance to underline his potential once more in the rejuvenated McLaren.

What was most impressive about Norris, whose podium equalled his career best to date, was that he didn't even look like he was overdriving, or pushing the limits further than he knew he, or his Mercedes-powered car, could go. For a young driver in such an important position in a grand prix, the temptation is to risk everything to land that dream result.

Instead, Norris quickly weighed up the reality of the situation, realised that Hamilton would overtake him regardless of any defence he put up, and let the natural course of the race happen around him. A trophy was his reward and, on that evidence, there will be plenty more to come this season.

A man who know all about when to push is Mike Wilds, the incumbent in the Motorsport News readers' question-and-answer hot seat this week. He speaks to Graham Keilloh about his long and varied career and underlines just why he is one of the nicest men in motorsport.

Elsewhere, we profile TF Sport, one of the UK's leading sportscar teams, and David Addison takes a look back at the first faltering steps of the World Touring Car Championship in 1987.

We also speak to British Touring Car Championship operation Team Hard, which has four brand-new machines for this season's competition. We discover that the 2021 targets are set high for the Kent concern.

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MOTORSPORT NEWS

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TF Sport's ever-expanding team

Team boss Tom Ferrier speaks to MN about his new ambitions

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How the WTCC ended in misery in '87

The first shot at a tin-top world title was seemingly doomed from the outset

Big ambitions for Team Hard in the BTCC

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RACING NEWS

VERSTAPPEN BUOYED AFTER DOMINATING A CHALLENGING GRAND PRIX AT IMOLA

Heat comes off the Dutchman as Lewis Hamilton slips into the gravel mid-race

Max: delighted with glory

Photos: Motorsport Images

Verstappen controlled the race throughout tricky conditions on Sunday afternoon

By Matt James

Emilia Romagna Grand Prix winner Max Verstappen has praise his team's in-race management after claiming victory in a dramatic race on Sunday.

The Dutchman grabbed the lead from polesitter Lewis Hamilton at the opening chicane and controlled the race on the damp circuit. Hamilton later slid off the road at the Tosa hairpin, but a well-timed red flag, which was shown following a high-speed collision between Merc driver Valtteri Bottas and Williams driver George Russell, meant the event was restarted.

Hamilton blasted back up from eighth to second place and overtook Lando Norris's McLaren in the closing stages. Hamilton's single point for fastest lap means he has a narrow advantage at the head of the drivers' championship.

Verstappen had pitted before Hamilton for dry tyres as the conditions on the Imola circuit improved to gain an advantage, but he had been held up by traffic, which allowed Hamilton to close in before his error.

Verstappen, who also nearly slid off the road on the restart, said: "It was very challenging, especially in the beginning. It was very hard to stay on track to be honest; it was very slippery. And then of course with the tyres degrading in the wet and then choosing the right moment to go onto slicks is never easy. I think we managed everything well."

Norris's podium was his career best to date, and he said he was thrilled with the pace from his Mercedes-powered machine. The Brit, who is third in the World championship, said: "I tried hanging on to second place, but Lewis was a bit too quick. It is nice to be fighting these guys. It's nice to be here on merit. Hopefully we can be again in the future. I am happy with third. I am not disappointed."

Further back, Fernando Alonso scored his first point of his F1 return for Alpine with 10th spot. He was gifted the place when ninth-placed finisher Kimi Raikkonen was penalised for a red flag infringement in his Alfa Romeo.

The stewards decided to take no action after the Russell and Bottas accident.

Results

1 Max Verstappen (Red Bull-Honda) 2h02m34.598s; 2 Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) +22.000s; 3 Lando Norris (McLaren-Mercedes); 4 Charles Leclerc (Ferrari); 5 Carlos Sainz Jr (Ferrari); 6 Daniel Ricciardo (McLaren-Mercedes); 7 Pierre Gasly (AlphaTauri-Honda); 8 Lance Stroll (Aston Martin-Mercedes); 9 Esteban Ocon (Alpine); 10 Fernando Alonso (Alpine).
Championship: 1 Hamilton 44; 2 Verstappen 43; 3 Norris 27; 4 Leclerc 20; 5 Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes) 16; 6 Sainz Jr 14.

STUCK KEEN FOR MORE AFTER KTM OUTING AT MONZA

Sportscar veteran Hans Stuck is looking at an expanded racing programme this year after making his racing comeback at Monza last weekend aged 70.

Stuck, the two-time Le Mans winner, drove a KTM X-Bow In Italy last weekend in the GT2 European series and finished seventh. He said that he would like to tackle further events where it was possible. Stuck, who is rated as a bronze driver, said he was looking at his calendar to enable him to take part in more rounds of the five-event series.

The German said: "I hope, because in the beginning I could only do three, because of other engagements in my work with the Volkswagen Group. But one of those, a presentation, is already cancelled. I think I have a good chance to stay."

Lotus was a regular in sportscar racing in the early 2010 with the Evora model

LOTUS EYES RACE COMEBACK WITH NEW GT4 MODEL

Bosses of Lotus has confirmed that they evaluating a race programme with one of its new models when the range is overhauled over the course of this year.

The Norfolk-based firm has undergone initial development with the British RML firm about a new GT4 racer, which will be based on the upcoming model so far designated the 131.

The firm is now owned by Chinese giant Geely, and new models are set to replace the current Elise, Exige and Evora models.

A mule racing chassis has been created to undertake the initial work using a Toyota V6 powerplant, which is currently used in the Evora machine, and the project is now awaiting sign-off from the firm's board before the competition comeback is rubber-stamped.

A spokesman from Lotus confirmed that there was a "definite interest to go racing with the 131."

He told Autosport: "Naturally we are looking at what we can do in racing with the new car and whether we can replicate the success we had with the Evora in GT4. As with any new car, you have to look at a number of criteria, including the business case, and we are in the middle of that right now."

TEN-YEAR DEAL FOR NEW MIAMI GRAND PRIX FROM 2022

Formula 1 has confirmed that Miami has signed a 10-year deal to host a grand prix based around the Hard Rock Stadium, which is the home of the NFL club the Dolphins, starting from next season.

The exact time of the season that the event in Florida will take place will be announced in due course, but it will be the second grand prix in the country alongside the permanent Circuit of the Americas facility in Austin, Texas.

F1 chiefs say the circuit will be 3.36 miles in length, have 19 corners, three straights and potential for three DRS overtaking zones.

F1's president and CEO Stefano Domenicali said: The US is a key growth market for us, and we are greatly encouraged by our growing reach in the US which will be further supported by this exciting second race.

"We will be working closely with the team from Hard Rock Stadium and the FIA to ensure the circuit delivers sensational racing but also leaves a positive and lasting contribution for the people in the local community."

The Canadian Grand Prix might be cancelled once more

CONCERNS OVER LIKELIHOOD OF CANADIAN GRAND PRIX FOR 2021

Stringent health rules in Canada to combat Covid could mean that the North American grand prix is cancelled for a second season in a row, with Turkey being lined up to replace the Montreal event should it get the axe.

The event on the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve is due to take place on June 13, but the country has some tough quarantine regulations as it is battling to repel a third wave of coronavirus.

Formula 1 chief Stefano Domenicali has been in touch with officials in Canada and set out the procedures that grand prix racing has in place to operate from within its own safety bubble, but the country's top brass have indicated that they feel hosting the race will be impractical.

An F1 spokesperson told news agency Reuters: "We are continuing our discussions with the promoter in Canada and have no further comment."

The race is due to be the seventh event of the 2021 calendar and falls between the Azerbaijan and French Grands Prix. Sources have suggested a race in Istanbul could be convened to fill the gap.

F1 BOSSES RULE OUT THE IDEA OF TWO-DAY RACE WEEKEND

Formula 1 bosses have said the idea of restricting a grand prix weekend to just two days is unlikely to happen as it would restrict the revenue potential for track chiefs.

The idea had been mooted and was brought into focus last term when the Emilia Romagna race at Imola in early November last season ran to the two-day format. While that event was praised, F1's new CEO Stefano Domenicali told the F1.com website that an idea to make all events run to the compressed timetable would not be introduced for all races.

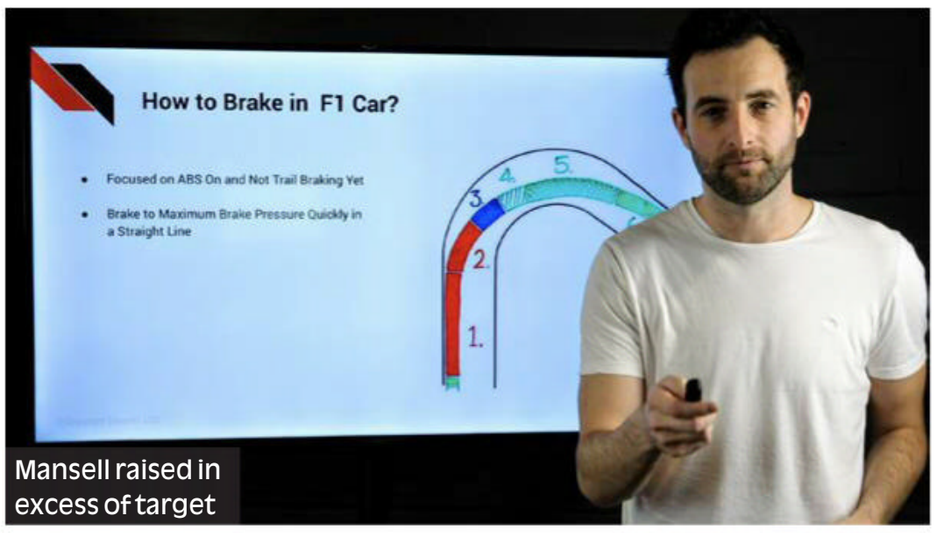
"All the organisers really wanted to have a full experience for the people and for the crowd, so we need to respect that," he said.

World champion Lewis Hamilton said that while he approved of the lesser environmental impact the compacted weekends would have, it would create sizeable difficulties on a sporting front.

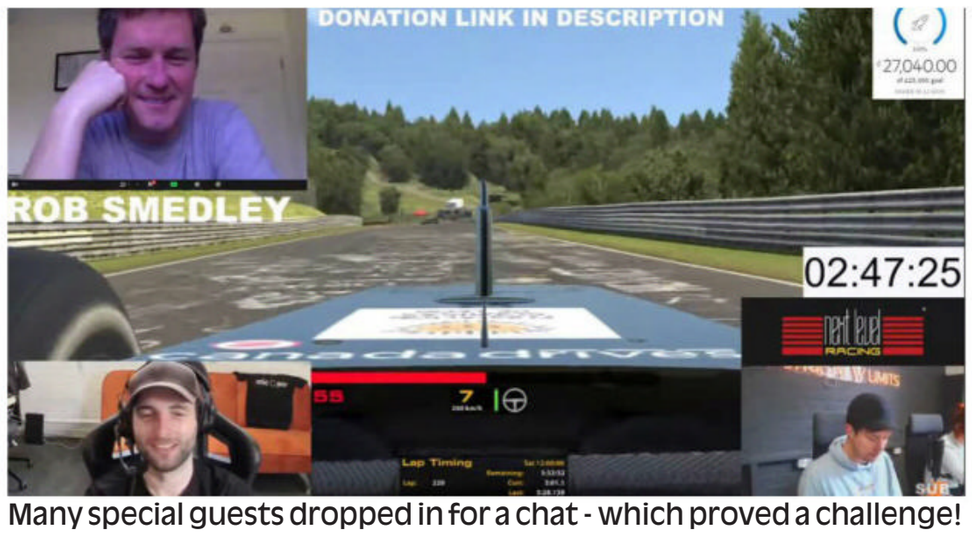
The Mercedes man said: "Normally you have two sessions on the Friday, you get time to make tons of different set-up changes and, if you're on the back foot, you've got time to catch up.

"When you start on a Saturday, you've got no time. You've got that one session to really get on top of it and the set-up between practice and qualifying. It made it so hard."

Photo: Driver61, Jakob Ebrey, Motorsport Images



Mansell raised in excess of target



Many special guests dropped in for a chat - which proved a challenge!

MANSELL RAISES £32K FOR CHARITY IN 24-HOUR F1 NORDSCHLEIFE SIM DRIVE

Guests including Chandhok and Brabham join EuroBOSS champion in livestreamed event for Colombian school push that is close to the heart of Mansell and his family

By Graham Keilloh

Scott Mansell has raised more than £32,000 to build a school in Colombia by driving a sim for 24 hours in a Formula 1 car on the Nurburgring Nordschleife circuit.

The boss of the Driver61 driver development business and EuroBOSS champion clocked over 3000 miles and 250 laps on the 14-mile circuit, celebrating at the end with a Daniel Ricciardo-style 'shoey'.

Mansell told Motorsport News: "Me and my partner had a baby last year, and it's made me a bit more sensitive to try and help others. Also my partner's Colombian, so we went to Colombia a year-and-a-half ago and went back to where she's from and there's some areas that are extremely poor.

"There's a YouTuber who did something similar a couple of months ago so we were partly inspired by him."

The livestreamed drive has been viewed over 100,000 times, and Mansell was joined for conversation during the 24 hours by several guests including Karun Chandhok, Rob Smedley and David Brabham.

"It's intense, you're using the same amount of capacity as you would in the real world," Mansell added. "And because of the format I was constantly talking, I would say for 20 of the 24 hours. That was a challenge in itself, you talk to your engineer in a race but not in the same way.

"[We raised] enough to buy a small piece of land and build a community learning centre, so that the whole community can improve their lives. I think we'll make [holding a fundraiser] a yearly thing at least."

CHINESE LION DANCE LIVERY FOR SPRINT CHALLENGE DEBUTANT

Former historic hillclimb competitor Kurt Leimer will switch to circuit competition and make his modern racing debut with Team Parker Racing in Porsche Sprint Challenge GB this season. And the 22-year-old, who has a Swiss/Hong Kong background and is a long-time classic Porsche enthusiast, will stand out from the pack with a distinctive livery on his Cayman. The colour scheme reflects Leimer's heritage, as it is based around the traditional Chinese Lion Dance that is said to bring good fortune.

MULTI-TASKING MARZORATI AIMING FOR BRDC F3 CROWN

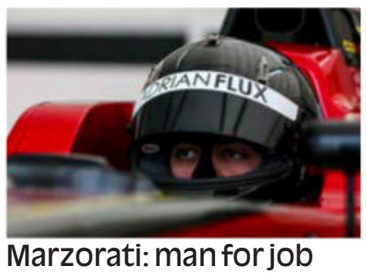
Max Marzorati is aiming for this year's BRDC British Formula 3 title after securing his return to the championship with Chris Dittmann Racing, thanks in part to juggling several jobs.

Marzorati to help fund his racing has been working in four different roles: at a biscuit factory, in a government role, at a holiday camp plus painting and decorating.

"I want to be pursuing my dream and I want to do whatever it takes to fight for that dream," Marzorati told Motorsport News, "and I don't have the fortunate position where my parents can say 'here's the money'.

"I have to work very hard, it's been 12, 13-hour days' work to get the money together to do this, but here we are!"

The ex-Formula Ford and Clio Cup Junior racer made his BRDC F3 debut in 2020's round two with JHR Developments before switching to CDR.



Marzorati: man for job

"I want to win it [the 2021 title], I haven't done all this work to come in and finish 10th. That's my aim and it always will be," he added. "The competition was so strong [in 2020], you look at where the guys who were running at the front last year are this year: Benjamin Pedersen who qualified fourth in Indy Lights and in pre-season testing Kaylen Frederick [has been strong] in FIA F3."

COWLEY SEEKS MUSTANG BRITISH GT4 TITLE CHARGE

British GT frontrunner Matt Cowley is aiming for this year's GT4 title after securing his return in a Academy Motorsport Ford Mustang.

Cowley in the Academy Mustang was in the thick of the GT4 championship fight last year though ended up fifth in the final table after losing momentum when driving partner Jordan Albert pulled out mid-season due to budget. The team is currently evaluating who Cowley's 2021 Silver-graded partner will be.

Cowley told Motorsport News: "[I'm] definitely aiming for the championship, if I wasn't I probably wouldn't be doing it. Just need to find a good team-mate to help me do that.

"It looks like it's going to be a good grid this year, there's a couple in there that I know from Formula Ford as well.

"Last season we were so close to winning and things out of my control happened. It was a real shame for [Albert] to have to pull out halfway through the season, especially when we'd just started going so well: we'd just solved all the issues on the car; me and Jordan were driving really well.

"[My budget's] not 100% there but we're pretty much the majority of the way that we know we'll be OK, so we decided to sign with the team [so the team could] see who we could get as a partner."

Cowley wants GT4 title after falling away in 2020

IN BRIEF

Lidsey lifted

Nurburgring Endurance Series racer Brett Lidsey made an unexpected graduation to GT4 racing for last weekend's season opener, after agreeing a revised deal with Sorg Rennsport to step up to its BMW M4 GT4 with driving partner Ivan Berets. Lidsey and Berets raced Sorg's BMW M240i last season. Last month's planned 2021 curtain raiser was abandoned due to snow.

Donington Hall purchased

MotorSport Vision has purchased the freehold of the Donington Hall Estate, next to MSV's Donington Park circuit, and plans to develop the Hall into a hotel that is scheduled to be opened for 2023. There will also be a direct route between the Hall and the paddock, as well as access to the Hall from the circuit itself by the original Starkey's bridge, so race cars can be driven there directly for special awards presentations.

International interest

Formula Woman has reported interest from around the world for its contest to win a McLaren 570S GT4 2022 GT Cup race seat. Formula Woman originally ran in 2004 as a race championship, and is now returning as an assessment competition. Applications are open until September with online tutorials beginning next month.

MX-5 to the max

The British Racing and Sports Car Club has confirmed strong interest in its three Mazda MX-5 contests for 2021: the MX-5 championship, SuperCup and new Clubman championship. The MX-5 championship has so far attracted 55 registered drivers, including last year's runner-up Oliver Allwood.

Penske: to be honoured

PENSKE CELEBRATION AT GOODWOOD FOS

American racing legend Roger Penske will return to Goodwood for the first time in nearly six decades to be honoured at this year's Festival of Speed.

This year's July 8-11 event, themed 'The Maestros – Motorsport's Great All-Rounders', will assemble some of the Penske team's most famous cars, including the McLaren M16B that in 1972 took the team's first of its 18 Indianapolis 500 wins, the Penske PC23 that dominated 1994's Indy 500 and the Formula 1 Penske PC4 that won the 1976 Austrian Grand Prix in John Watson's hands.

Penske himself will take to the Hill in the 2008 Sebring 12 Hours-winning Porsche RS Spyder. There will also be an outdoor exhibition detailing the man and team's racing history, plus there is an additional special tribute planned for the Festival's final day.

Penske raced at the Goodwood circuit in 1963 in the RAC Tourist Trophy, finishing eighth in a North American Racing Team Ferrari 250 GTO.

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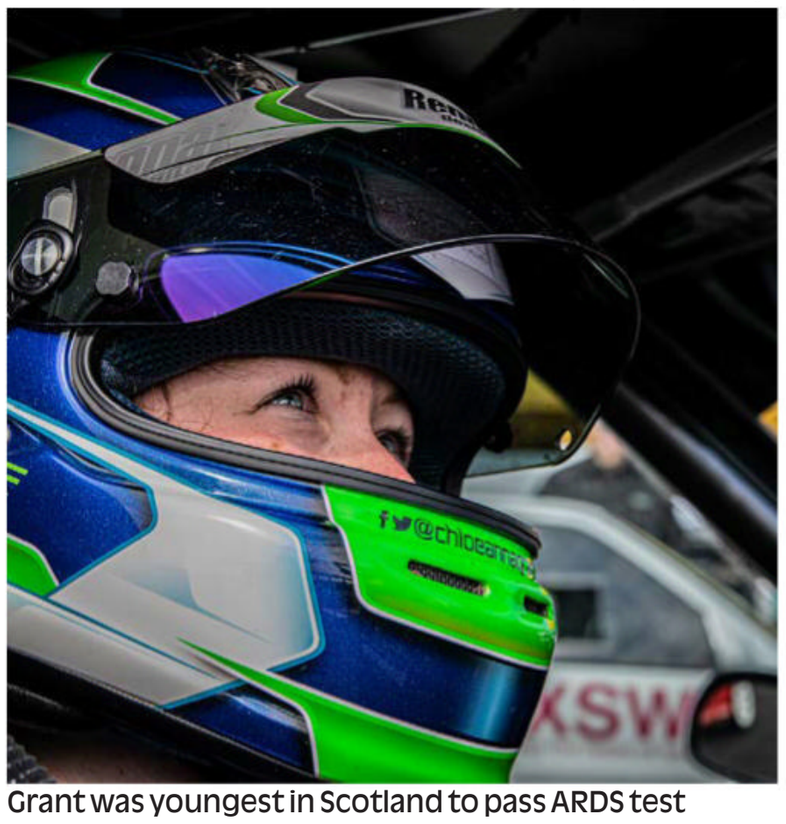
RACING NEWS

Photos: Junior Saloon Car Championship, Mini Challenge

Grant beat 24 rivals to prize



Grant was youngest in Scotland to pass ARDS test

CHLOE GRANT CLAIMS FULLY-FUNDED JSCC SEASON AS LATEST SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

Fifteen-year-old SMRC Rising Star is to embark on her first car-racing campaign in Junior Saloons

By Graham Keilloh

SMRC Rising Star Chloe Grant has claimed a fully-funded 2021 Junior Saloon Car Championship season, worth more than £30,000, as winner of the latest JSCC scholarship contest.

Fifteen-year-old multiple karting champion Grant, from Perth in Scotland, beat 24 rivals in the Stafford Driving Centre assessment day that included fitness, media and driving tests. She now is set for her first car-racing campaign, with the Citroen Saxo category's 2021 season opener this weekend at Cadwell Park.

Previous JSCC scholarship winners include 2019 champion Scott McIntyre. Grant told Motorsport News: "It's not sunk in yet! It felt great. There's a few times I've looked at dad and gone 'I'm a car driver!' It's weird to say!

"This was my year that I was looking to move up to cars, so I talked to a few people – like Katie Milner who won the championship and Emily Glanvill who's won the scholarship – and they said [JSCC is] a brilliant championship. I've driven the car for two days now and I'm definitely not regretting [the choice]!"

Grant was driving the car for the first time on the day of the assessment. She said: "At fitness I did OK, media I've always felt confident about, and driving I was really nervous for but third time out I felt a bit more confident. It was quite intense."

Grant was attracted into motorsport by her older sister Lucy who also races. Chloe started karting aged seven and took the record for the youngest to pass their ARDS test in Scotland, doing so aged 13.

IN BRIEF

Champ's comeback

Mini Challenge Cooper champion Matt Hammond will return to the category this year with the Excelr8 Motorsport team he won his title with in 2017. Hammond after his title win put his racing on hold due to budget. "I'd love to pick up where I left off, but I know there are a lot of quick drivers," Hammond said.

Returning Page

Multiple Mini Challenge Cooper race-winner Rick Page is making a surprise return to the category for this weekend's Snetterton season-opener. Page finished runner-up in the 2015 Cooper championship but then stepped away to focus on business commitments. "The decision to return has been a really last-minute one," Page said.

Brown is back

BRDC Rising Star Lewis Brown will return to the Mini Challenge JCW grid this season for his third year with the LDR Performance Tuning team. The 22-year-old Ginetta GT5 Challenge champion is seeking to build on a 2020 campaign wherein he took his first JCW wins and led the table for a time.

Walmsley first recruit

Lydia Walmsley will this year step up from the Mini Challenge Cooper class to the JCW contest, as the first recruit to the new young driver programme of British Touring Car Championship squad BTC Racing. Walmsley, 19, finished fifth in last year's Cooper standings with two second-place finishes, and has a signed a three-year deal with the BTC team.

BARC RELAXED ABOUT WAIT FOR SPECTATOR RETURN

The British Automobile Racing Club, which operates Thruxton, Pembrey and Croft circuits, is relaxed about the latest UK government timetable for readmitting spectators to events as Covid restrictions are eased.

Fellow venue operator MotorSport Vision expressed frustration at the May 17 return, having hoped for spectators at club events from April 12 *(see MN, April 15)*.

BARC group CEO Ben Taylor told MN: "We're pleased that we're going to get some spectators in on May 17. The important one for us is in June when we go back to full crowds.

"I can understand MSV's frustration, but for us we haven't really got any major events [during the time period]. We've got BTCC behind closed doors in May and we've got a historic meeting which will be under 4000 crowd so that's enough for us.

"It's challenging, but everyone's accommodating and rising to the challenge. We have a good relationship with our local councils and authorities.

"The whole year has been very very difficult, but no more than [for] other businesses. We have to get over it and go again. We're still fighting!"

GRAVES STEPS UP TO JCW WITH COATES AND GRAVETT

Graves Motorsport this season will race in the Mini Challenge JCW championship for the first time and has recruited Bradley Gravett and race-winner Max Coates as its drivers.

Clio Cup frontrunner Coates switched to the British Touring Car Championship-supporting Mini contest last year and with Elite Motorsport took a win and pole on the way to sixth in the standings. For 2021, having switched to Graves, he aims to win the title.

Gravett, son of BTCC champion Robb, competed in the Mini Challenge Trophy in 2020 with the Graves team that has ambitions to participate in BTCC in the near future.

Team manager David Graves said: "Max will bring a wealth of JCW experience with him on our progression to the next level, whilst Bradley knows the team well. We believe we can work together and be in a position to fight for race wins from the first round in 2021."

Noted frontrunner Coates (r) joins Gravett at Graves

OULTON PARK: BARC BY PETER SCHERER — APRIL 17

MULTI-CAR VICTORY FIGHTS TO FORE IN BARC'S CURTAIN-RAISER

Both Caterham Graduates Sigmax/Sigma 150 races went down to the wire before Harry Senior and Ben Winrow claimed victories in the British Automobile Racing Club's Oulton Park season-opener.

In race one, Simon Griffiths and Winrow's battle for second place left Senior with an early lead.

But in the closing laps they re-caught the leader, with Winrow briefly ahead. Then a lap from home Winrow lost out by straight-lining the Knickerbrook chicane, dropping to third, and Senior just held off Griffiths to win.

The three-way fight for first continued in race two: all three led, but Winrow got away with a lap to go to seal his win as Senior and Griffiths almost dead heated for second.

It was comparatively plain sailing for Simon Shaw in the first of the Caterham Sigma 135 races, making good his escape to win as David Read and Chris Skillicorn duelled for second, which Read eventually clinched.

Race two contained a four-way fight for victory. Read pushed James McCall all the way, but still lost out by 0.097 seconds, with Ian Fortescue and Tom Power inches behind.

Paul Rose's Saker led the CNC Heads Sports/Saloons race from Island on lap two, leaving the erstwhile leading Spire of Jon Woolfitt a solitary second.

Paul Dobson's Locost claimed third after Andrew Southcott's MG Midget ran out of fuel on the last lap.

Lee Harpham comfortably won the first of the Division 1 Superkart races from Carl Hulme and Carl Kinsey.

But, after leading from the start of race two, Harpham was forced to surrender his lead to eventual victor Sam Moss.

Paul Platt took both of the F250 National contests.

Jasver Sapra in his BMW E46 beat Anthony Bennett's Caterham R300 for the win in the first of the BARC Red races, while Bennett comfortably won the second contest by over 10s from Bryan Bransom's BMW E36.

RACE WINNERS

Caterham Graduates - Sigmax/Sigma 150
Race 1: Harry Senior
Race 2: Ben Winrow

Caterham Graduates - Sigma 135
Race 1: Simon Shaw
Race 2: James McCall

CNC Heads Sports/Saloons
Paul Rose (Saker RAPX-S1-500)

British Superkarts Division 1
Race 1: Lee Harpham (MS Kart/Harvey VM)
Race 2: Sam Moss (Anderson/VM)

F250 National
Races 1&2: Paul Platt (PVP/Gas Gas)

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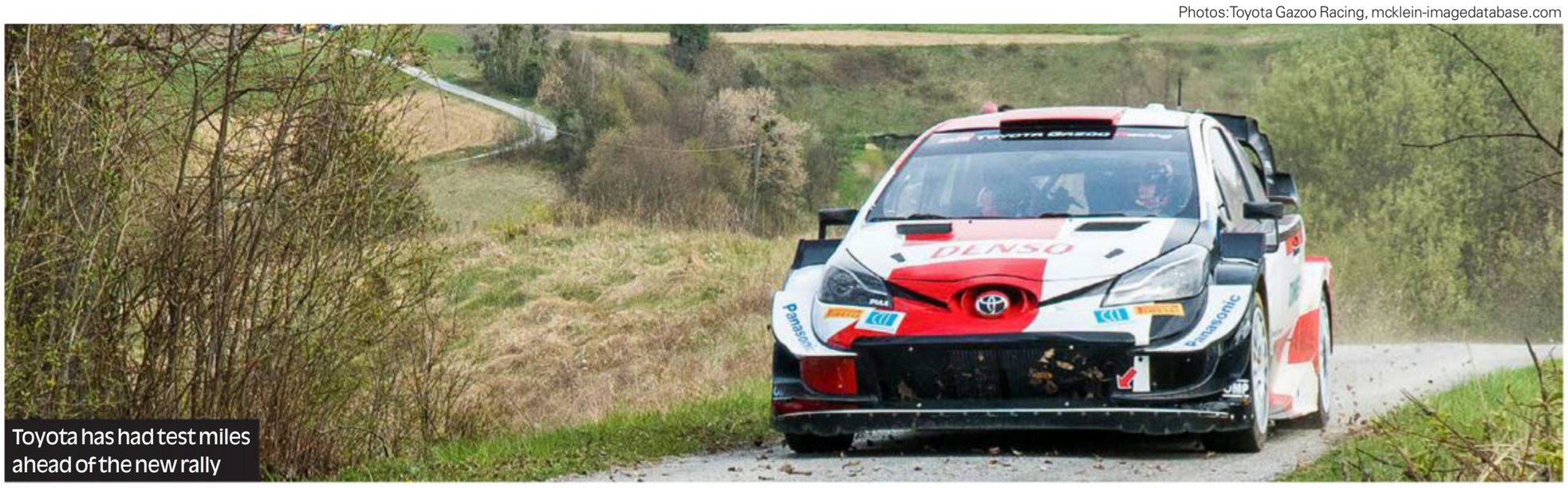


Toyota has had test miles ahead of the new rally

LATVALA URGES EVANS TO BIDE HIS TIME ON CROATIAN TEST

Toyota boss says the Welshman has the consistency to reap the bigger rewards

Evans has a great point return during his Toyota career

By Graham Lister

Jari-Matti Latvala wants Elfyn Evans to stay patient when Croatia's first World Rally Championship event starts today (Thursday).

Welshman Evans, 32, trails Toyota factory team-mate Kalle Rovanpera by eight points in the title chase after finishing fifth on February's Arctic Rally Finland.

Apart from Rally Monza last December, when he failed to complete the full route following his leg two crash, Evans never finished outside the top four in 2020.

But Evans, who was second to World champion and fellow Toyota driver Sebastien Ogier on the season-opening Monte Carlo Rally in January, is still in a "good" place in the championship race, according to his team boss Latvala.

"Elfyn has been driving really consistently," Latvala told Motorsport News. "OK, maybe he has not been finding that winning speed in the first two events. But it doesn't need to be concerning him. His championship situation is good. The most important [thing] is to score the points and I'm sure the feeling will come.

"It's about adapting to the new tyres, which is a challenge for everybody, but finding the confidence to push to the limit. For me he has been doing a very clever job. He just needs to stay patient and I'm sure the win will come when the time is right."

The Croatia Rally is the first pure asphalt event of the season but Latvala's third at the head of the works Toyota team following his switch from full-time driving.

Following the Finland-based team's defeat to the rival Hyundai squad in Rovaniemi, Latvala admits it served as an important wake-up call.

"We were expecting to win there but that is the thing, you should never expect," Latvala added. "Results show you have to be in the moment and keep working, that's the only way if you want to win. You can't count on being strong the last time, that doesn't bring you the success."

INFOBOX

Croatia Rally
When: April 22-25
What: WRC round 3/12
Base: Zagreb
Surface: Asphalt
Stages: 20
Distance: 186.61 miles

Irishman Breen looks forward to "interesting" rally

Craig Breen and Elfyn Evans have spoken of a feeling of going into the unknown ahead of the Croatia Rally.

Although Breen and Evans have tested in the country, the stages north, south and west of Zagreb are uncharted territory for both.

"It's honestly quite difficult to find any information about the rally, but it looks like it will be an interesting event, hopefully with some nice weather," said Hyundai driver Breen.

Works Toyota driver Evans said: "We've been able to study videos of the stages but nothing can substitute actually being on the recce and seeing the route for real.

"The stages look quite mixed, with some wide, fast parts and some very narrow bumpy parts, and there could be quite a lot of cutting. It looks like we need to be quite adaptable to the different surfaces and different character of stages.

"We don't have masses of experience with this car on dry asphalt or with the Pirelli tyres, so in testing we were trying quite a few different settings. But the feeling was generally positive straight away."

Breen: unknowns ahead

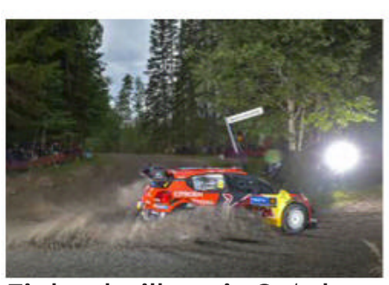
OCTOBER PLAN IS NEW CALENDAR SLOT FOR RALLY FINLAND IN 2021

Rally Finland's new autumn date was due to be rubberstamped earlier this week.

However, the event will switch to October 1-3, rather than a late September slot as Motorsport News reported last week.

The rescheduling will boost the chances of fans attending the Jyvaskyla round, which relies heavily on ticket sales for funding.

Meanwhile, the Azores Rallye, which had been set to host the European championship opener from May 6-8, has been postponed at the request of the local health authority following a spike in Covid-19 cases. Rally Poland is now expected to open the ERC season from June 18-20.



Finland will run in October

Ingram has a clear objective ahead of his 2021 debut

INGRAM FEELS NO PRESSURE AHEAD OF RALLY2 OUTING

Chris Ingram has told Motorsport News that he won't forget his game plan on the Croatia Rally.

Ingram has secured a two-year World Rally Championship campaign with major backing from CarFinance 247. The Zagreb event will mark the 26-year-old Brit's first start in a Rally2 car since November 2019 and only his second competitive outing since he lifted the European title two years ago.

"I'm not going to pretend I'm going to go flat out from the first stage in Croatia because I still need time," Ingram told MN. "I'm the fittest I've ever been but nothing can prepare you for the speed until you're doing it. That sharpness and the concentration levels, that is the missing piece that you lose after so long out of the car.

"Croatia will be a rally for us to learn and to get back up to the level with the other guys. But it's a long-term plan. We are in a great place and we can start that first stage and think we're going to love this, then make small improvements stage by stage.

"I'm under no pressure with nothing to prove. I've got to enjoy the experience in Croatia, and if we can do that we'll get a result."

Ingram and co-driver Ross Whittock prepared for the Croatia Rally with a test in the Alsace region of France earlier this month followed by a test in Croatia last Sunday.

M-SPORT'S FOURMAUX RELISHING NEW-FOR-ALL STAGES IN CROATIA

Adrien Fourmaux, M-Sport's new World Rally Car recruit, couldn't have picked a more perfect event to make his debut in rallying's topflight.

The 25-year-old Frenchman has told Motorsport News that the combination of using stages untried by all the World championship regulars and a test in the days leading up to the recce will cancel out his lack of experience of his Ford Fiesta WRC.

"A new rally helps me because the level with each driver will be more consistent," said Fourmaux, who steps up from WRC2. "The other drivers will not have the big experience like they have on the other rallies. And testing the weekend before the rally will help me to have the right pacenotes."

Fourmaux's British team-mate, Gus Greensmith, was also due to test in Croatia last weekend ahead of his first event with new co-driver Chris Patterson.

Fourmaux will step to a WRC car after previous R5 outings

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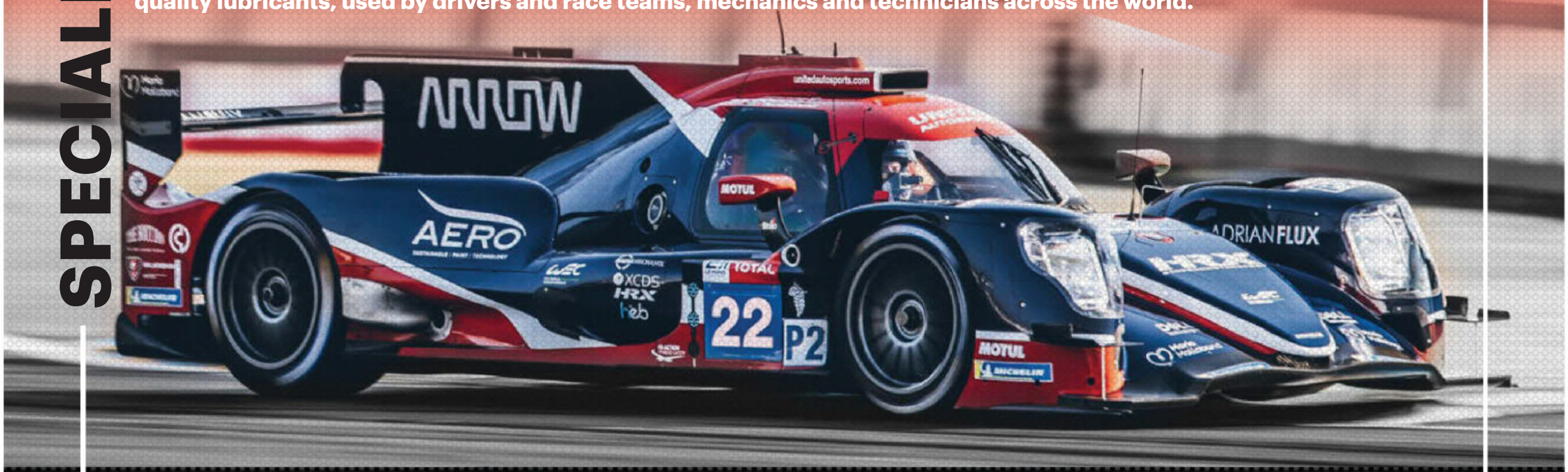

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RALLY NEWS

Jackson: sold Subaru

JACKSON'S SUBARU SOLD AS HE HAS NEW PLANS

BTRDA regular Matthew Jackson has sold his Subaru Impreza N12 and is eyeing a return to two-wheel-drive competition.

Jackson bought the Impreza two years ago but never used in it as he was instead restricted to just two course car outings before the coronavirus pandemic took hold. He initially planned to spend a year learning the car before a more concerted championship effort but has reassessed those plans.

Jackson told MN: "I've been toying with the idea [of selling] for a while and thought I'd see what the interest would be and that would decide to me whether that car stays or if I get something else. It's not as if I disliked it at all, it's quite the opposite, it was just more of an opportunistic sale as the market seems to be very competitive for selling."

Jackson has strong two-wheel-drive experience having pedalled a Nissan Micra for years, but he also entered the 2019 Rallynuts Stages in a Ford Fiesta R2, a class of car that's now of potential interest.

"There's a lot of effort being put into the R2 stuff currently," he said, "and it's a good leveller if you're in similar machinery to kind of see really where we're at."

ORGANISER HAILS ONLINE SYSTEMS AS A SUCCESS

Organisers of the Get It Sideways Stages – the first rally to run in 2021 – Cheltenham Motor Club has confirmed that several protocols brought about by Covid-19 will remain when restrictions begin to relax.

Several aspects of the event were digitalised including the popular Rallies.info entry system that was updated to incorporate all the information Motorsport UK needs too to avoid a signing-on process.

Clerk of the course Kevin Smith told MN: "There will be no going back to producing tons of printed paperwork. The information that was collected on paperwork still needs to be created but will be stored.

"Hopefully by the time of the Three Shires Stages in September the Covid-19 restrictions will be relaxed and we can socialise. That is what is important for the enthusiasts involved. The computerised systems will remain though: they are the way forward now."

For an event report, see page 11.

GARRY JENNINGS PLOTS FIRST BRC CAMPAIGN SINCE 2003

Northern Irishman ready to return to the mainland for fresh competition

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, SMJ Photography

Garry Jennings last tackled BRC in 2003

By Jason Craig

Garry Jennings has told Motorsport News he will return to the British Rally Championship this year in a Ford Fiesta R5 for his first full campaign since 2003.

The last time the Kesh man featured in the BRC he was a Peugeot 206 works driver. He will compete with his regular co-driver Rory Kennedy.

"The BRC has all the ingredients this year to be a fantastic competition," Jennings told Motorsport News. "I have to say that when I approached the organisers about returning to the BRC they were very positive.

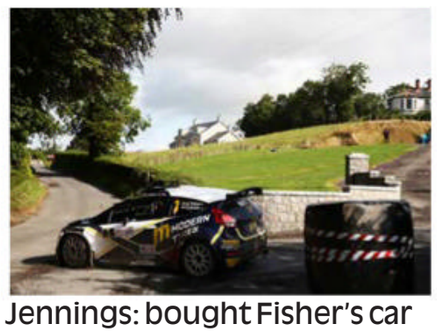
"They've really welcomed myself and Rory with open arms and I'm looking forward to getting started. The format suits me down to the ground and when I added all my costs up, it was no more expensive."

Jennings acquired the ex-Alastair Fisher, right-hand-drive Ford Fiesta last year and planned a number of events in it only for Covid-19 to put a stop to motorsport activity. He has had the opportunity to test it, however, and admits the M-Sport-developed supermini is impressive.

"It is a fantastic bit of kit, it really is," he said. "It is a mighty little machine and from the moment I set foot in it, I only needed 10 minutes to get up to speed with it. The most surprising thing is just how easy it is to drive; it's like a little Super 1600 car. You only need to keep the revs up and everything is OK."

Jennings said his decision to switch tack for 2021 came down to the fact right-hand-drive R5 cars are still considered an anomaly in the Irish Tarmac Championship.

"It's strange really, because the number of people I have chatted to about this – people who know absolutely nothing about rallying – still can't understand why I am unable to use a right-hand-drive car in Ireland," he said. "It's about time Motorsport Ireland got themselves into gear so that these cars can go rallying rather than turning them away."



Jennings: bought Fisher's car

IRISH RALLY ENTRY FEES SET FOR SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE

Entry fees for rallies in Ireland look set to be hiked in an effort to make events "financially self-supporting".

Under the proposals – which have been recommended by Motorsport Ireland's Rallies Commission – crews could pay €850 (£738) for forest events, €800 (£695) for shorter Tarmac rallies and €1000 (£868) for internationals.

Rallysprint meetings at Mondello and similar gated venues would command €210 (£182), with juniors receiving reduced rates across the board. A final decision is expected to be taken at the next Motorsport Council meeting on Tuesday April 27.

As part of rallying's "soft return" this season, only one-day competitions can be organised with no discounts allowed given the "possibility of no advertising or sponsorship" due to the current economic climate.

Motorsport Ireland president John Naylor defended the fees in his communication to club secretaries, saying clubs in Ireland "need and deserve the financial security to run viable and safe" competitions.

"The commission entered into the return to motorsport process being mindful of the current status of most motor clubs, officials, marshals and competitors, and all stakeholders due to the long period of inactivity," said Naylor. "We acknowledge competitors will have to pay more for entries."

Bumping up entry costs marks another crossroads for Irish rallying as, in 2017, Motorsport Ireland said motorsport was "on the brink" due to "unsustainable" insurance premium increases of more than 200%. Since then, teams have absorbed a portion of the cost to ensure seasons can go ahead as intended. The 2013 Irish Tarmac Rally champion Garry Jennings feels the future looks bleak for the sport in Ireland if more expense is heaped on competitors.

"When is this madness going to come to an end?" he told MN. "I genuinely cannot see the same number of clubmen taking part in as many events. And don't forget, clubmen are the lifeblood of the sport. Costs are already high – but these proposals are just ridiculous."

Entrants in Ireland will be under an increased financial burden

Bird will headline the entries for MN Circuit series

MOTORSPORT NEWS SERIES RETURNS WITH A 100-STRONG ENTRY LIST

After a four-month lay-off, the Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship returns this weekend for its second round, the Snetterton Stages Rally.

The event is the first of four rallies scheduled to complete a shortened season with the Neil Howard Stages (May) running before a double-header at Anglesey in July. The Dukeries Rally ran at Donington Park back in December.

Co-ordinator Darren Spann told MN: "I'm immensely proud and it's great to see such diverse entries during a time like this."

Frank Bird headlines the 100-strong entry, looking to add to a win in the Donington season opener, with fellow Ford rival Mark Kelly giving chase after a switch to Fiesta R5 machinery was rewarded with a podium finish in Leicestershire.

Others in the Ford contingent returning to try and close the gap to last year's Snetterton winner Bird include Kevin Procter, Rob Hughes and the ever-improving Paul Smith.

Chris West's eagerly anticipated debut in the ex-Nigel Mummery Porsche 997 GT3 was blighted early on by gearbox gremlins, but initial pace was enough for the double MNCRC champion to feel confident ahead of the car's visit to the power-friendly 300 circuit. "It was still quick," said West after Donington, "so when it's back to right again it will be mega. I can't wait."

The Ford Fiesta R5 is heavily represented once again with another Escort Mk2 convert in Paul Murro jumping into the car. Reigning champions Barry Morris and Tom Hutchings remain absent from the entry list after also missing the opening round.

Photos: edpphoto.com, Dan Bathie, Jakob Ebrey, Duncan Stephens

CAVE ENJOYS POSITIVE TEST IN WELSH FORESTS

Cave (inset) racked up the mileage in his Hyundai

By Luke Barry

Tom Cave has told MN his first taste of a rally car in eight months was "encouraging" as he worked through differential tweaks in his Hyundai i20 R5.

Cave was testing in the PCRS Hyundai last Tuesday in north Wales and completed just over 200km – a shave under three times the length of an average UK gravel rally.

"Honestly it took less than 10km to get back up to speed again. It's amazing, it's like muscle memory," Cave told MN. "Once you do something for so many years it's always there in you. I said that to Dale [Furniss, co-driver] and he said the same as well, we were both up to speed which was really encouraging.

"I thought I'd be just trying to get my braking points right on the first morning but no, it was bang on. It was nice to get back in the car again and get some proper miles under our belt which is what we need to stay sharp."

On the diff adjustments, Cave added: "I'm more naturally driving the car from the rear, trying to really unbalance the rear of the car into the apex whereas some drivers like it more neutral or even with a bit of understeer and that's what we're trying to gravitate towards because it's more efficient. We certainly got that nailed by lunchtime and then by the afternoon we were just banging in the kilometres."

Cave's 2021 programme is still unclear, but he admitted "we're still working hard behind the scenes" to pull something together. He said: "Whether we'll be there at the first round of the BRC is yet to be seen. At the moment it's looking very unlikely unless things come together in the next few weeks, who knows?"

CHICHERIT GOES ALTERNATIVE FOR FUTURE DAKAR CHALLENGES

FIA Cross Country Rally World Cup winner Guerlain Chicherit will return to the Dakar rally next year, driving a bioethanol car called the GCK Thunder.

Chicherit has started the Dakar 10 times but has raced in World RX for the last five years. The Frenchman is the figurehead of the Green Corp Konnection (GCK) Group's development of an alternative fuels programme for the Dakar.

It showcased an all-electric machine at the event this year, and is developing a hydrogen-hybrid racer called the e-Blast H2. But, before the e-Blast H2 is set to race in the event in 2023, Chicherit will campaign the bioethanol GCK Thunder – an adapted ex-works Peugeot Dakar 340bhp machine – next January.

The entry is part of a multi-year test programme of drivers, car and components. Chicherit will be co-driven by his former co-driver Alex Winocq.

Chicherit said: ."The development programme that we've now launched as GCK and the work we're doing to reduce the event's environmental impact makes me super excited to return. The Dakar is the biggest challenge an athlete and a team can face together, and to do so successfully is a long-distance race in itself. I'm ready and can't wait to take on this next challenge."

TIN-TOP KING NEAL CONSIDERS BRITISH RALLYCROSS OUTINGS

British Touring Car title-winner Matt Neal could race in the British Rallycross Championship 5 Nations Trophy this year.

The three-time champion Neal is taking a sabbatical from the BTCC this year, with Gordon Shedden and Dan Rowbottom racing Team Dynamics's Honda Civic Type Rs. Neal chose to skip the squad's Knockhill pre-season test last week to sample rallycross equipment at Lydden Hill.

The 54-year old was one of several drivers to test STARD's 450kW Ford Fiesta ERX electric rallycross Supercar, that will race within the headline 5 Nations BRX class this season.

"It was pretty eye-popping," Neal told MN. "I've driven high-horsepower cars but, in that thing, it never stops accelerating. As long as you press your right foot down, it will accelerate more than you can believe. It impressed me how driveable it was, and how agile the car felt – no less so than a petrol car.

"I doubt I was pushing near the limit of the proper guys but it's really good fun, it felt like driver input would count for so much."

Neal says rallycross has similar facets to touring car racing. "I've always been drawn to the BTCC because it's not so purist, it's a bit elbows out and a bit me versus you," he said. "Rallycross takes that to another level. I haven't been head-to-head with anyone yet but I can only imagine. This test has certainly whetted my appetite."

Neal enjoyed his outing

FIVE DATES PLANNED FOR IRISH RALLYCROSS RETURN

Bosses of the Irish Rallycross Championship have revealed a five-round calendar to get rallycross back underway.

Series bosses plan to begin with a double-header in July, running alongside the planned second round of 5 Nations BRX at Mondello Park. Four further Saturday dates at Mondello Park on August 7, October 30, November 13 and December 11 will complete the series.

"It's been a long road... but there is light at the end of the tunnel," said an IRX statement. "Thanks to Mondello Park for squeezing in five rallycross events into what will no doubt be a manic year for them once restrictions are eased."

Test days are planned on May 16 and 30. The series is also creating a class for autocross competitors to compete, starting from the second round in August, and will be run as a time trial.

Lloyd Spendlove will return to IRX with his Lotus Exige while Super1600 driver Andrew Toomey is switching from a Citroen C2 to a Peugeot 106, which he is also planning to race in 5 Nations BRX.

REPORT: CLASSIC TRIAL

Selwood was in impressive form all day on Torbay Trial

TEENAGER TOPS THE HILLS ON TORBAY CLASSIC CURTAIN-RAISER

Torbay Classic Trial
Duncan Stephens
Organser: Torbay Motor Club **When:** April 11 **Where:** Exeter **Starters:** 58

Nineteen-year-old Jack Selwood won the Torbay Classic Trial on April 11 on his first road reliability trial, borrowing a Reliant SS1 from his boss.

He dropped just three points over the 15 sections. In a move to fit in with government guidelines, passengers were not allowed in the cars.

Dean Vowden gave a debut to his Lonsee Special, which had been six years in the making. He led the specials class on the road and was tied with Duncan Stephens until two hills from the end, whereby Stephens sneaked a point advantage to take second overall from Vowden.

Nicola Butcher had a quiet day in her 1300cc Volkswagen Beetle and finished as best saloon car ahead of Stewart Green's special.

Aaron Haizelden slipped up on Combehead Creek restart. A costly four points dropped the Deere Special driver to sixth, but he beat Nick Deacon's Suzuki X90. Deacon was left ruing a fail on Narracombe Lane but was fasted overall on the special test.

Charlie Merson, 18, made his debut in a newly acquired Special to finish in eighth overall, a point ahead of James Shallcross and multiple champion Dean Partington.

Results

1 Jack Selwood (Reliant SS1) 3 points; 2 Duncan Stephens (UVA Fugitive) 10 points; 3 Dean Vowden (Lonsee Special); 4 Nicola Butcher (VW Beetle); 5 Stewart Green (SG Gruffalo); 6 Aaron Haizelden (Deere Special); 7 Nick Deacon (Suzuki X90); 8 Charlie Merson (Ford Special); 9 James Shallcross (VW Golf GTi); 10 Dean Partington (DP Wasp).

REPORT: GET IT SIDEWAYS RALLY

LATE BURST OF SPEED REAPS REWARDS FOR FORD ESCORT BATTLER PAYTON FOR DOWN AMPNEY GLORY

By Ian Harden
Organser: Cheltenham Motor Club **When:** April 17 **Where:** Down Ampney **Starters:** 66

Josh Payton and co-driver Jamie Vaughan produced a final stage charge to take 20 seconds out of their main rival and claim their first-ever Get it Sideways Stages win. The Ford Escort Mk2 crew beat Neil Weaver / James Bailey's Vauxhall Corsa S1600 by 28 seconds, following a close battle that lasted from SS3 onwards.

Bright sunshine and dry stages at Down Ampney created a consistently high pace and Payton drove hard early on to hold fourth behind Rob Dennis /Andrew Boswell (Skoda Fabia Proto). Then Dennis retired on SS2 after breaking his steering rack, and subsequent leaders Paul Wedgbury/Neil Dashfield terminally damaged their similar Fabia's gearbox, leaving Payton with a healthy lead. However, he came under strong pressure from Weaver, whose pace increased markedly as he got used to his newly built car. A minor collision with another competitor that caused front bodywork damage failed to slow Weaver and, with two stages left, the two crews were equal on times. Now, Payton put pedal to metal and his noticeable extra pace on the final test clinched victory. Andy Corner/Ade Camp (Peugeot 205) lost time early on with a bad tyre choice. However, they fitted fresh covers and fought back to take third place.

Ben Moore/Andy Tomlinson's Proton Satria Neo S2000 finished third on times but four-wheel-drive cars were not eligible for overall awards.

Results

1 Josh Payton/Jamie Vaughan (Ford Escort Mk2) 52m 33s; 2 Neil Weaver/James Bailey (Vauxhall Corsa S1600) +28s; 3 Andy Corner/Ade Camp (Peugeot 205 GTi) 4 Stefan Davies/Daniel Petrie (Escort Mk2); 5 Steve Harkness/Wayne Ball (Escort Mk2); 6 Tomas Davies/Eurig Davies (Escort Mk2); 7 Richard Jordan/Dan Evans (MG ZR 105); 8 Wayne Lloyd/William Lloyd (Escort Mk2); 9 Chris White/Jason Harris (Escort Mk2); 10 Chris Wheeler/Shaun Layland (Citroen DS3 R3T Max). **Class winners:** Jordan/Evans, Weaver/Bailey, Corner/Camp, Davies/Petrie, Ben Moore/Andy Tomlinson (Proton Satria Neo S2000), Rex Ireland/Adrian Scadding (Escort Mk2).

Payton prevailed in Escort

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HISTORICS

DOWN THE WORKSHOP

LOLA T70 MK3B

Current owners:
Robert Beebee and Steve Boultbee-Brooks

Thunderous Lola T70 Mk3B

Beebee has raced extensively
Beebee: "We had a Chevron before this and prior to that I was racing Minis with my son Josh. I started with chain-driver Frazer Nashes for 15 or 20 years. Frazer Nashes are so much fun to drive and a licence to show off."

Now he shares the Lola T70 Mk3B
"The Lola has a fantastic history. It is said to be the first T70 Mk3B built and it is chassis SL76/138 from 1969 and they were busy cars back then. Brian Redman mainly raced it in '69 for Syd Taylor when it did 24 major races in the UK and Europe and then in South Africa at the end of the season."

Redman raced it regularly
"It finished second in its first race at Silverstone at the end of March. He won at the Norisring, Thruxton and in Sweden and John Love won twice in South Africa in December."

It has a big history
"It's a very evocative piece of motor racing history. Frank Sytner had it at one point with Simon Hadfield. Before us, it was with Carlos Monteverde. We've had it about three years and we've generally done Masters races and some Peter Auto events."

It is used regularly
"We've tried to campaign it fairly hard. We've done a lot to try and improve its performance but I'm not sure we're getting very far on that front! It has been completely stripped and rebuilt by Martin Stretton's team. The handling is unbelievably benign. It's like a big version of a Chevron B8 but it just takes a lot more manhandling."

It is pretty physical to race
"The engine and gearbox have been rebuilt and we've tried to make the gearbox a bit easier as I've certainly found it quite a physical thing and it is very tiring. But I've found that having a proper seat made and going back to an open face helmet has made a big difference. I know they look fearsome but it's really lovely on the limit. We're hoping to do the full Masters series this year. Steve is doing Historic F1 with his Lotus, so we're trying to run the same weekends."

The Porsche has turned into a racer

Photos: Paul Lawrence

Perez used to rally the 911

PEREZ JUNIOR PLOTS FULL HISTORIC RACE CAMPAIGN IN FATHER'S PORSCHE 911

Carrera Cup battler to handle former rally machine on the UK's tracks

By Paul Lawrence

Former Carrera Cup racer Seb Perez is moving back more than 50 years in Porsche history to race a 1966 Porsche 911 in historic races this season.

Perez, 21, will race the two-litre 911 that his father Steve used to win the 2003 British Historic Rally Championship. It has spent much of the last 15 years in the workshop but has now been rebuilt into an immaculate race car by DanSport.

"It's very different to what I've done before," said Perez Jr. "I'm used to historic cars from rallying but not racing. It will definitely be a challenge. I never rallied it and didn't drive it as a rally car. I'm not too sure what else I'll be doing this year so this is the main thing at the moment. I've got no modern racing planned at the moment."

Perez and former Carrera Cup team-mate George Gamble gave it a debut run in the Gentlemen Drivers race at Donington recently and showed good pace before retiring with an oil leak.

"It's not really been used a lot. Louise Aitken-Walker drove it at the Chatsworth Rally Show but it's been parked in the corner. We've put the steering wheel on the other side and the plan is to do the Peter Auto 2.0 Cup."

At the end of the season, Seb will return to rallying to tackle the Roger Albert Clark Rally in a fresh BDG-powered Ford Escort Mk2, which is currently being built.

Caine is a further entry in the burgeoning Formula 2 ranks

Caine ends wait for restored March

After four years of work, Jeremy Caine was able to have his debut in his Formula 2 March 712 at Donington Park recently as he stepped up from Historic Formula Ford 2000.

Caine's car was in storage for nearly over 40 years until he acquired it four years ago.

It was last raced as a Formula Atlantic by Howard Rose in 1974 and then put away in Rose's garage in Surrey. Caine heard about it and finally managed to buy the car four years ago and has worked ever since to rebuild and restore it to full Formula 2 specification with a 1600 BDA engine.

In its early life, the car was sold by Frank Williams and was once owned by Richard Longman, though the Mini ace never raced it. Caine is another addition to the ever-growing Historic Formula 2 field.

Harrison settles in to ex-de Angelis Shadow

Mark Harrison raced the ex-Elio de Angelis Shadow DN9 for only the third time in four years at Donington Park during the recent Masters season opener.

Harrison, who also races in Club F3 and has a Toleman TG280 Formula 2 car, contested the British Grand Prix Historic F1 support race in 2018 and 2019.

The 1979 Shadow spent time in America with Ed Swart but is now with Harrison in the UK. "We went the Masters test and broke the gearbox on the first lap," said Harrison. "So the Easter weekend was a test session for us. We'll try and do all of the UK Historic F1 races this year."

Harrison in de Angelis helmet too

Hywel Evans is delighted with Cobra

HYWEL EVANS DELIGHTED WITH CIRCUIT DEBUT IN AC COBRA

Richard Hywel Evans has joined the Gentlemen Drivers grid in the AC Cobra raced last year by Adrian Willmott and Andrew Jordan.

Evans has been racing for 10 years, having started in the Lotus Cup and has also raced an Austin-Healey and a Porsche 911.

"The Cobra is everything I hoped it would be. I think of it as a big Healey," said Evans, who will split his time between Masters, Motor Racing Legends and Peter Auto events this year.

The car is prepared and tended by Cobra expert CRC Engineering and was shared at Donington recently by leading historic racer Olly Bryant, who is a friend from the Porsche 2.0 Cup.

IN BRIEF

Monaco is go...
The 12th edition of the Monaco Grand Prix Historique will go ahead as planned this weekend despite the challenge of the pandemic. The event, postponed a year due to the virus, will feature seven races on Sunday after free practice and qualifying on Friday and Saturday. The programme centres on grand prix cars from the 1930s to 1980 as well as a single sportscar race for cars from 1952 to 1957.

...for the few
The entry list for this weekend's Monaco Grand Prix Historique has been badly impacted by the pandemic as many teams and drivers have been unable or are unwilling to travel to the principality. Normally, most of the seven grids would be full with at least 30 cars but this year the average grid is fewer than 15 cars. Two grids, for pre '66 F1 cars and pre '61 F1 cars, each feature just nine entries.

Shepherd to FF2000
Murray Shepherd is planning a full campaign in the Classic FF2000 Championship this season in the Van Diemen RF82 of Anthony Hancock. Shepherd, 28, is the son of AC Cobra racer Andy and won the 750MC Locost title in 2020. "I hope to do a full season in both Formula Ford 2000 and Locost. There are no clashes, so I can try and win both championships," said Shepherd.

Trio of Tecno
Three Tecno F2 cars will be on the grid this year in Historic Formula 2, marking the first time since the early 1970s that three of the Italian chassis have raced together. This season, Chris Lillingston-Price and Julian Stokes are going to be joined by Andy Langridge in a third Tecno.

HERO-ERA on hold
The HERO-ERA Lima to Cape Horn classic rally has been postponed for a year until November 2022 due to the impact of the Covid pandemic. The daunting 29-day marathon will cover some of the most spectacular roads in South America and the 40 available places were quickly over-subscribed. Ten Pre-War cars are included in the provisional entry list.

Juniors flock in
More than 50 Formula Juniors will compete across three races within the Donington Historic Festival (May 1-2). On Saturday, the field will be split into two races, one for the earlier cars and one for the later cars, while a single 38-car grid will run on Sunday comprising some cars from each section. It will be the second round of the UK Formula Junior Championship.

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

MIKE WILDS

THE MAN WHO'S BEEN THERE AND DONE THAT

Graham Keilloh talks to a man surely unrivalled in the extent of his rich, varied and long-lasting career behind the steering wheel

Few can claim Mike Wilds' range of racing experience

Mike Wilds is like no other racer. Not an exaggeration. The 75-year-old has just started his 55th season of competition, at Donington Park on Good Friday recently, sharing Ron Maydon's Ginetta G4R in the Masters Gentlemen Drivers contest.

Wilds indeed has competed in 55 of the last 56 seasons, starting in 1965. And he's not been racing to make up the numbers either.

His trajectory took him all the way to Formula 1 and several Le Mans 24-hour races. He's bagged 12 British championship crowns across sportscars, GTs and touring cars, plus helped Ecurie Ecosse to the World Sportscar Championship Group C2 teams' title. And Wilds remains competitive behind the wheel today.

As we discover too he's also found time for tuition – in helicopters as well as racing machines – plus has driven Indycar's pace car and even fulfilled clerk of the course duties… He's a thoroughly pleasant chap too.

So let's start with the point that he first managed to make racing pay.

Question: What are your memories of becoming a professional racing driver?
John Cavill
Via Facebook

Mike Wilds: "Oh gosh! How long have you got? John [Cavill] was instrumental in helping my career along with his father Jack.

"My abiding memory of the time I went from racing part time to professional was when I was racing in Formula 3. John and his father Jack bought a March 713S which was the ex-Rose Bearings James Hunt car, and we raced that. I did my first Formula 3 race at Thruxton I think and I had a really good race against a lot of good guys who were racing the works Marches such as Jochen Mass.

"We were going pretty well which got Jack and John thinking that we should get a current Formula 3 car. And I was working for Firestone race-tyre division at the time as operations manager, I was in charge of getting all the trucks to Formula 1 and sportscar races around Europe in the World championship and organising all the tyres to go to South Africa or wherever the other grands prix and sportscar races were in the world. It was a brilliant job and when they were short I used to travel to some races like Le Mans, Targa Florio, acting as a race tyre engineer on the works Ferraris, Lotuses or whatever we were working with.

"And Jack said that he would buy this Ensign but he didn't really have the wherewithal to run the car so we needed a budget to do Formula 3 because there were so many Formula 3 races: there was

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Motorsport Images, Paul Lawrence, Porsche

Getting onto F1 grid in 1974 was career high

Wilds' 55th racing season has begun...

Wilds and long-time friend John Cavill

the Forward Trust British championship, there was the Lombard North Central British championship, and there was the John Player European championship. Jack really wanted to do them all which was a very expensive operation.

"I'd been trying to scrounge drives in other people's racing cars because I couldn't afford to have my own and a lovely man called Jeremy Sumner, who I met through a friend of a friend, let me drive his Chevron B8 GT car at Brands Hatch, he was doing the GT race but said that I could do this Formula Libre race which was all single-seaters so I would be the only GT car in it.

"It was called the Royal Tunbridge Wells Trophy, and I won the race beating all the single-seaters. Jeremy was a bit taken aback and he said 'wow you obviously have a talent, I'd like to help you'. He introduced me to a company who were looking to get involved in motorsport called Dempster Developments. I had a meeting with them at the Hilton in London, presented a budget for the European and the British championships, which was an immense amount of money, and they said 'well we'll do it but you have to concentrate 100% on this, so we would pay your wage to be a racing driver'.

"I talked to my wife, she said you should go for it, so I handed in my resignation to Firestone which was a big deal because it was a wonderful job. Little did I know that two or three years later the Americans closed the European division anyway, so it was the right decision. So that's how I became a professional racing driver."

MN: Has it been full-time professional driving all the way since?

MW: "Pretty much. I had very lean times when I couldn't get drives for a season. I was bit like a journeyman boxer, [people would say] 'oh could you stand in for Win Percy in the works Toyota in British touring cars?' for instance, rather than getting lots of full-time drives.

"I did have a full-time drive in 1974 when I did Formula 5000 with a works March, which was a Formula 1 car with a Chevrolet engine, and led the European championship until sadly I tangled with a backmarker while lapping them at Thruxton which caused me to break a wrist. Then I had my very short attempt at being a Formula 1 driver but in sadly uncompetitive cars.

"But to supplement it – because by now I'd got a house, mortgage, children – at one stage I drove for Martin Carroll of Carroll's Transport, for a few months driving lorries out of Heathrow delivering air freight when I couldn't earn out of motor racing. But I have a passion for flying and I'd taken my helicopter licence, and I'd taken my helicopter instructor's rating, and so during the week if I wasn't racing or testing I flew helicopters and taught people to fly helicopters."

Question: Is it true you could have driven a Lotus 72 in 1974?
Auto Tradition
Via Twitter

MW: "I'd gone to Zandvoort when I was trying to put myself around to get drives. [Lotus F1 incumbent] Jacky Ickx seemed to have had a problem with Lotus and hadn't turned up for first practice for the Dutch Grand Prix and I was asked if I had my gear, which I had, and it seemed to be OK with the organisers, with the Formula One Constructors' Association, and I can remember sitting in the car and as far as I was concerned I was going to go out and try and qualify the car. But just before first practice Jacky Ickx turned up so I didn't actually drive the car.

"I did subsequently drive [a Lotus 72]. Ronnie Peterson was my hero and some years ago when a Japanese gentleman called Katsu Kubota bought Ronnie's Lotus 72 chassis number 6 that he'd won Monaco in in 1974, and rather than travel over CGA, Colin Bennett, who rebuilt the car, got me to test it.

"It was very emotional to drive a Lotus 72 anyway but especially one of Ronnie Peterson's, my hero's car, which happened to be just in front of me on the grid when I'd started my first grand prix in 1974 at Watkins Glen in the works Ensign. He'd obviously had a bad practice session because I'd qualified 22nd, but it was quite surreal sitting there looking at Ronnie in that Lotus 72 and then subsequently decades later to actually drive it."

Question: Racing drivers of the modern era cannot possibly relate to the breadth of technological and performance advancements that you have experienced in your career. What would you class as the most significant game-changer, in context of the time, from a driver's perspective through the decades you have been competing?
Richard Cracknell
Via Facebook

MW: "My biggest difference is the respect between racing drivers nowadays. When I was driving in the '70s there was a respect because you could really hurt somebody if you made a lunge. The circuits were not as safe, we didn't have runoff. We didn't think about it at the time but the cars, for instance the Formula 5000s and the Formula 1 cars, were basically aluminium monocoques and if you hit something you were going to get badly hurt.

"So I believe that we showed more respect to our competitors compared to the drivers of today. I'm sure some do have respect but with the circuits having so much runoff and the sport now being far more of a business than back in the '70s, [then] it was a sport and business sponsorship was just starting to happen. There's a lot of contact that is in my view disrespectful to fellow competitors and that's the biggest thing from the driver's point of view.

"On the technological side, I did a race for Redline in the Porsche Carrera Cup, [in] Porsche's spare Carrera Cup car, a couple of years ago. [The] 991, the car was amazing. But it had no character.

"And I'm a huge Porsche fan, it was unbelievably quick, the grip level was unbelievable. But the German engineer [there], he looked at the data and said 'yes Mike you drive old school'. I was braking, turning in, getting the power on just as an old-school racing driver would, I had to totally change in those two half hours [Friday practice sessions] how I drove racing cars for the previous 50-odd years. I found it very difficult.

"I eventually did a lap time and this was my first attempt [and] I wasn't last on the grid but the biggest thing for me was that the car lacked character, it didn't talk to me. It was unbelievably impressive but I like the car to talk to me when it's sliding or whatever, this car didn't slide, it just had so much grip level and the brakes had a fairly dead feel to them.

continued on page 16

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FEATURE

It was a totally different art."

MN: Is that why these days you mainly stick to the historic racing, to get that sort of character out of the cars?

MW: "Yes. I adore racing Rainer Becker's Porsche 956, it's just probably one of the best racing cars in the world. I love driving Ron Maydon's little 1964 Ginetta, it's very low powered with its little twin-cam Ford engine, but I can mix it with Cobras and lightweight E-types because I can brake later and carry more corner speed and so on. They blast by on the straight but I have so much fun driving that.

"And I also drive Goldsmith & Young's [Aston Martin] Project 214, a continuation-type replica or whatever you want to call it, and I love them because they slide, they don't have immense grip. The 956 does because it has a lot of aero and fair amount of ground effect but the car still talks to me, and I still have to change gear with a lever and I have a clutch and a brake pedal and throttle rather than just left-foot braking with these latest things with paddles, and I quite enjoy left-foot braking."

Question: You were an F1 driver and a star in single-seaters, but arguably more successful in sportscars, especially in Group C2 and Thundersaloons among others. Could you have focused on this path earlier and been a factory sportscar driver?

Simon Hill

Via Twitter

MW: "I think the answer to that is yes, I should have done. But when you have this burning ambition to reach the pinnacle of your sport which was Formula 1, I'd worked so hard with starting out with no money trying to get to Formula 1.

"Sadly the only drives I could get in Formula 1 were in uncompetitive cars. Mike Hailwood said to me that I shouldn't sign to drive the BRM [for 1975] and he was absolutely right because sadly this wonderful British team was running on a shoestring budget.

"For instance in the initial test I went to Snetterton with Chris Amon, I drove initially a P160 which was beautiful, one of the best Formula 1 chassis I'd ever driven at the time, and he was driving the P201. He was not going to drive for BRM in 1975 and I was then put in the P201 in the afternoon and it threw a rod.

"It didn't seem to be a problem, the team said 'oh we have other engines' because in a few months we were going to be off to Argentina to do the first round. And when I got to Argentina and I was looking round the car, the engine that I blew up at Snetterton was in the car with the block welded and so on and of course revving it to over 12,000rpm it didn't last very long. And I don't think I ever finished a practice session or a race in the BRM.

"So I just would have loved to have driven a competitive Formula 1 car to see if I could have hitched a career as a Formula 1 driver. Probably not, I don't know, I really wanted it, I had a modicum of talent, so you never know. But I really would have liked the opportunity to have driven a competitive Formula 1 car at the time just to see."

MN: In your subsequent sportscar racing you had a long time driving for Ecurie Ecosse, so what was that like?

MW: "Yes it was wonderful. I did my first Le Mans in a baby [Porsche] 935 in 1981 and I really enjoyed Le Mans. I was passionate about Le Mans, it was probably apart from sitting on the grid of a grand prix my favourite motor race, it threw everything at you as a driver.

"And when Hugh McCaig and Ray Mallock contacted me about driving for [Ecurie Ecosse] in Group C2 I was ecstatic, I loved it. I loved the atmosphere in the team and I really really enjoyed driving with other drivers and working together to achieve a result.

"I felt so at home driving for Ecurie Ecosse. Ray Mallock, David Leslie, myself, Marc Duez and on occasion the sadly missed now Johnny Dumfries I drove with, Win Percy. It was a wonderful time and we were successful, we had some wonderful battles with Gordon Spice and Ray Bellm in their works Spice.

"We finished second a couple of times in the World C2 championship and then 1986 when we swapped from Cosworth to a 6R4 V6 engine that was supplied by Austin Rover, they were rally engines that John Dunn of Swindon made into endurance race engines and we won the World championship which was wonderful, absolutely wonderful. So I spent four wonderful years driving for Ecurie Ecosse.

"And then I drove a works Nissan at Le Mans which was great, it paid quite well, but sadly I didn't get to keep that drive after Le Mans, they went for young guns and so on, so that was a shame.

"But Thundersports driving with Ian Flux in the Can-Am Lolas was wonderful, we won a lot of races. I spoke to Derek Bell recently, I've just finished writing my autobiography which Derek Bell's written the foreword for me, he was saying that it's just the luck of the draw. He managed to get a works drive with Ferrari, a works drive with Porsche and it would have been absolutely ideal for me, but it wasn't to be."

Question: Is the secret to a long racing career to be a thoroughly nice guy as well as a competent driver? Because you epitomise that, and your career has to be one of the longest!

Martin Short

Via Facebook

MW: "Well it's very kind of Martin to ask that question! I like to think I'm a nice person, I know a lot of people who aren't particularly nice people. I would rather be known as nice man than a reasonable racing driver. I like to be nice to people; I like people to be nice to me.

"I think it does help because when you're trying to get drives, if you're not a particularly nice person I don't think people will let you drive their racing cars! I'm not an egotist. I feel unbelievably lucky to do what I've done in the sport having started with nothing. And yeah I think it does pay to be nice.

"I've been unbelievably lucky that my passion for the sport hasn't gone away. Everybody that races a car must have passion for the sport, but a lot of them are doing it for maybe different reasons. They might be financial, and they've managed to get good sponsors and can take a very good wage from it. But I never earnt a lot of money out of driving racing cars, I made a living and feel very lucky that I managed to do that for a while.

"The passion also goes not only for the motor racing but I love to help people drive quickly on track which is why I do instructing. I enjoy seeing people progress, putting my experience into them and seeing them do well, be it flying a helicopter or driving a racing car or their roadgoing GT3 RS or Ferrari. So the longevity of my motor racing, I'm not the best racing driver in the world so I think probably being a nice guy did help a lot."

MN: Presumably too keeping enthusiasm and passion for it has helped?

MW: "Absolutely, absolutely, and it won't go away. I'm 75 now and after driving Rainer's 956 in Monza towards the end of last year, which was sadly the only one we could do because of the Covid restrictions, there is no finer feeling than passing the pits at Monza in a 956 and getting towards 200mph, it's brilliant."

Question: What was your most memorable moment in your racing career?

Suzi Warcup

Via Facebook

MW: "Sitting on the grid at the World championship Formula 1 race is very special, especially when you haven't qualified for the previous two or three races or whatever it was. I tried to qualify the Ensign [in 1974], we had a basic problem with the car, every time we put the car into a fairly hard left-hand corner it lost fuel pressure, and you couldn't afford to have any issues because you had 30 cars trying to get 25 places on the grid. And in Austria, Italy and Canada I didn't qualify because it was impossible with the engine cutting out on left-hand corners.

"Mo Nunn of Ensign, bless his heart, between the Canadian Grand Prix and the American Grand Prix, which was only a week or so, totally changed the fuel system and I qualified 22nd out of 30 cars at Watkins Glen, because the engine kept its fuel pressure for a whole lap!

"And it was unbelievably special to see at the end of qualifying that I was actually in the motor race. In fact at one stage during qualifying I was in such a mindset that I was sitting in the car in the pitlane, I was looking down towards Turn 1 at the Glen and thinking that would be a great place for me to watch the race from. And it really gave myself kick up the butt: 'what am I doing thinking this way when I was so determined to get in the race?'

"And subsequently I put a really decent lap together, being chased by Jody Scheckter in the works Tyrrell, and got myself on the grid when people like Hans Stuck in the works March didn't qualify, Tim Schenken in a works Lotus didn't qualify. I thought I done pretty well."

MN: When you said earlier you were starting behind Ronnie Peterson I take it that was at Watkins Glen?

MW: "Yes, yes, absolutely. Ronnie was two or three cars in front of me, and it is very surreal when you're sitting on a grid with Niki Lauda, Emerson Fittipaldi, James Hunt, Ronnie Peterson and Mario Andretti, all these people who you hold in such high esteem. And when I got up to the circuit on race morning and you look at the newspapers and they put the grid there and you look through all these iconic names and then suddenly your name is there, it's a very surreal experience."

MN: How did the race go at Watkins Glen?

MW: "Dreadful! [Laughs] We cured the fuel problem, so the car was running well and had good fuel pressure. On the warm-up lap I came round and pulled up on the grid and I lost fuel pressure, the fuel pressure release valve on the DFV failed and suddenly the engine wouldn't rev at all. I tried to pull away and I'd been lapped before I managed to get the car round to the pits, but I knew if I didn't get round to the pits I'd be out of the race, and I wanted the experience.

"Mo didn't know what was wrong with the car so they didn't have a Cosworth V8 pressure release valve in the pits. So I think I sat in the pits for seven or eight laps while they found one and fitted it and I just went out and tagged on to Chris Amon in the BRM and we just played with each other, it gave me the experience of driving. I finished the race but I wasn't classified because of the amount of laps I'd lost in the pits. But the upshot of that dicing with Chris was the conversation with [BRM boss] Louis Stanley asking what I was driving in the following year."

Question: Did you race at Crystal Palace?

Keith Lowes

Via Twitter

MW: "I did twice. I raced Formula Ford 1600 there in 1971 in a Titan Mk4, which was owned by lovely man called Sheridan Thynne. Sherry eventually became Nigel Mansell's manager and was sponsorship coordinator for Williams Formula 1. Lovely man who'd seen me race in a Formula Ford Vixen that I'd scrounged to drive in 1970.

"And I didn't have a car to drive in 1971 so he offered it to me, a car and trailer as long as I gave it back to him at the end of the year in the same state. I had no money so I took the car and I was working for Firestone, I went to the PR department said 'any chance Firestone can sponsor me?'

"They said no, so I was trying to raise money then the PR department phoned

Wilds talks with boss Mo Nunn

Wilds loves the instructing role

It's a hard life... Wilds takes on James Hunt at Scalextric

"I'm 75 and my racing passion hasn't gone away"

Mike Wilds

Porsche 911 "lacked character"

Wilds is still going strong behind the wheel today

"I'd have loved to have had a good F1 drive, just to see..."

Mike Wilds

Wilds helped Ecurie Ecosse to a World championship in a "wonderful" spell

Wilds' short-lived BRM spell was hard

me back and said 'got an idea'. Firestone used to provide Ferraris, Surtees, Gulf 917 [and] GT40 drivers with Firestone overalls, and also bright red Firestone jackets, and they were made by a company called Skyjump. And Firestone were just about to put a big order for more clothing with Skyjump and they said 'we'll ask them, they can have this order as long as they sponsor you in Formula Ford'. So we ran it as Team Skyjump, they gave me £500 and I ran the car for the whole year on £500.

"And I raced Formula 3 at Crystal Palace. I had a nice dice with Tony Trimmer, he was driving a works Lotus, it was a strange little Formula 3 car that Lotus built, but at the start of the final I touched the back of Roger Williamson on braking for the first corner, touched my front wheel on his back wheel and it flicked me up in the air and put me over in the wall so I didn't finish. So I didn't have much luck at Crystal Palace but I did enjoy it."

MN: What was it like to drive on?

MW: "It was very very very tight with railway sleepers just on the edge of the track, there was no runoff whatsoever, but I really enjoyed it. I liked the fact that I lived in London and [in] less than an hour I could go motor racing in my local circuit, which was wonderful. I was born and raised in Chiswick so it was only going across from west London to south London. But to drive round you had to be very accurate, overtaking was challenging. It was great to have a race track in London, wish there was one now."

Question: Am I mistaken or did you drive a yellow-and-orange Ford Capri pace car in saloon racing in the '80s?

Rob Cairns

Via Twitter

MW: "I did, in fact I drove the pace car which is an X Pack Capri for the Indy races at Silverstone and Brands Hatch which was a great experience. In the 1980s I took a job with the British Racing and Sports Car Club to stay involved in motor racing when I couldn't get many drives. I was still racing but I was also then competitions director of the British Racing and Sports Car Club. So I started being clerk of the course at race meetings and driving pace cars at British Aurora-type Formula 1 races. If I wasn't driving in them I was driving the pace car."

MN: So how did you enjoy working on that side of things?

MW: "I did quite enjoy it. The thing that I did notice was when I was a clerk that if somebody had done something wrong on track and they were referred to me that they would sit in front of me and they actually listened because they felt I knew from their side, as a driver we could communicate on a level. I think competitors did appreciate the fact of getting a rollocking from a man who had actually been there and done it."

Question: Favourite chopper story please?

Martin Short

Via Facebook

MW: "I had about 8000 hours of flying helicopters [and] I bought and sold helicopters, another string to my bow to try and earn money. I worked for a friend of mine called Peter Millward. He owned a Lola T70 Aston Martin, the ex-works car that John Surtees and David Hobbs drove and I raced it for him occasionally.

"And he said 'while you're faffing around why don't you come and work with me at the helicopter business? You can have time to go off and do racing as well.'

"I sold a helicopter to a man in Dublin and he said 'that's great but could you deliver it?' So I flew this little Robinson R22 helicopter to Weston which is an airfield just outside Dublin. This one was a very basic Robinson R22 helicopter with just an E2 compass, no artificial horizon, no directional gyro. And I set off, I flew it up to Dublin but I landed and refuelled before I was to cross the Irish Sea, and I checked the weather and it all looked pretty good. There was no mention that there was some sea fog about halfway across the Irish Sea.

"And I took off and holding course with my little E2 compass I saw this bank of fog in front of me, and I thought well that's OK and I'll go over the top of it and I climbed and I climbed and I climbed and I could not get over this bank of fog. So I turned round and came back down to the face of the fog where it started and I didn't have enough fuel to go back to the English mainland.

"So I thought the best thing I can do is hover, so I hovered over the sea then hover taxied into the fog to try and move forward using the sea about six or seven feet below me as my artificial horizon, and to keep my senses so I didn't get spatially disorientated. And as I was going along everything was fine, the fog got slightly thinner so could go a bit faster and then it would clamp in again.

"But luckily on one of the areas of fog where it thinned I just saw the bow of a ship coming into view from my left so I stopped and I had to wait until this huge cargo ship passed in front of me and then disappeared into the fog to the right! It was really scary, and then I could carry on and after about 10 minutes I came out of the fog on the other side, I could see the Irish coastline and managed to make it to Weston without further ado but that is probably the scariest flight I ever did." ■

Wilds hands out the prizes to BRDC Formula 3's rising stars in 2019

That pace car driver looks familiar... From Brands' Indycar visit in '78

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FEATURE

TF SPORT
TAKING IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Multiple GT championship winner TF Sport is having a busy 2021, and in places you might not expect, as Graham Keilloh discovers

TF Sport steps up in '21 to make its LMP2 debut

"This is my first day back in the workshop for 45 days!," TF Sport boss Tom Ferrier tells Motorsport News. "[It was] Daytona then straight home for a day, then straight to Dubai and Abu Dhabi and then a nice 10-day quarantine period. So back to work today and then we're off to Paul Ricard next week for a test, so yeah it's non-stop…"

This year is set to contain little rest for multiple GT champion team TF. As Ferrier notes: "it's quite funny, we've done a 24-hour race and a full championship [in 2021] already!". These were in the shape of its Daytona 24 debut in January then the Asian Le Mans Series' pair of double-header meetings in February.

And there's no relent as TF this year will have two cars in the World Endurance Championship GTE-Am class, in which it triumphed at Le Mans last year and narrowly missed out on the drivers' and teams' titles. And TF also last weekend returned to start a European Le Mans Series campaign for the first time since 2017, when again it just missed out on the titles.

And the 2021 ELMS entry heralds a major shift for TF. For the first time the GT specialist squad will race an LMP2 car, the Oreca 07-Gibson. The entry is titled 'Racing Team Turkey by TF Sport', at the behest of driver Salih Yoluc who races with Charlie Eastwood and ELMS champion Harry Tincknell.

Plus with TF also entering in ELMS a LMGTE-class Aston Martin Vantage for John Hartshorne, Ollie Hancock and Aston factory driver Ross Gunn, it is the first time the team has run in multiple classes in an international championship.

Ferrier though isn't daunted by the changes. "It's obviously going to be very different for us, but the basics are still the same in running the team," he says.

"It's just the set-up stuff, that's really going to be in the biggest bit [that's different with an LMP2 car]. It's a much more aero efficient car, more single-seater esque than anything we've run before, but for the guys it's still a lump of metal with four wheels on it so the principles of bolting it together remain the same and the sporting side of it remains the same for a team."

Ferrier continues: "[It's] basically the same guys [working on it] as always other than engineering wise we've done a tie-up with [LMP2 team] Jota who have supplied us with some engineers for the first year. It's beneficial for both sides because they're only doing WEC so they get double the mileage and we gain from their experience.

"We're not expecting too much but the aim is always the same to try and be at the front. Let's see where we are."

As for running an LMP2 car and GTE car at the same time? "The teams will be segregated, there will be a GTE team and there will be an LMP2 team in terms of personnel and the way it runs it is two separate teams," Ferrier explains. "Obviously we'll be in the same hotel every night and be eating in the same places but other than that it's going to be two separate teams.

"It was Daytona, home for a day, then Dubai…"

Tom Ferrier

"We've done it in GT4 and GT3 before. Everyone knows their job role, everyone knows what car they're on, everyone's got the same equipment both side of the garages so it's just a duplication running one to two cars which is very much the same as WEC as well."

One of TF's WEC Vantage entries for this year also has a very new look, running under the banner of Japanese outfit D'station Racing. "It's their first full year in WEC with us," Ferrier explains, "they've got a good chance, they've got a good package, they've got Andrew Watson in as a Silver [graded driver] now, so if both cars can keep it on the island and stay out of trouble I think we could have some strong results.

"[The partnership came about] through Aston Martin Racing. D'station run their own cars in Japan on multiple programmes with Astons. They wanted to come to us with some experience [of WEC GT] so it's very much a joint partnership. We'll be crewing the car for them and they're supplying the drivers. And it'll be a good combination."

TF's second WEC Vantage entry is for experienced Bronze Ben Keating, GT World Challenge Endurance Silver Cup champion Felipe Fraga and Porsche Supercup runner-up Dylan Pereira.

TF on its Daytona bow earlier this year finished seventh in class. "[It was] a good experience, a learning experience for sure," Ferrier notes. "Everything's quite different in IMSA to what we're used to.

"But we were good by the race, we just didn't really have the pace in the last quarter of the race that we needed to get a result, we had a little a bit of damage. I think a little bit of BOP [hurt us too].

"It's funny, we had no issues at all, no problems with the pitstops, no problems with the car or anything like that, so to come away with a P7 was almost a little bit disappointing, but it's something I'd love to go back and do again."

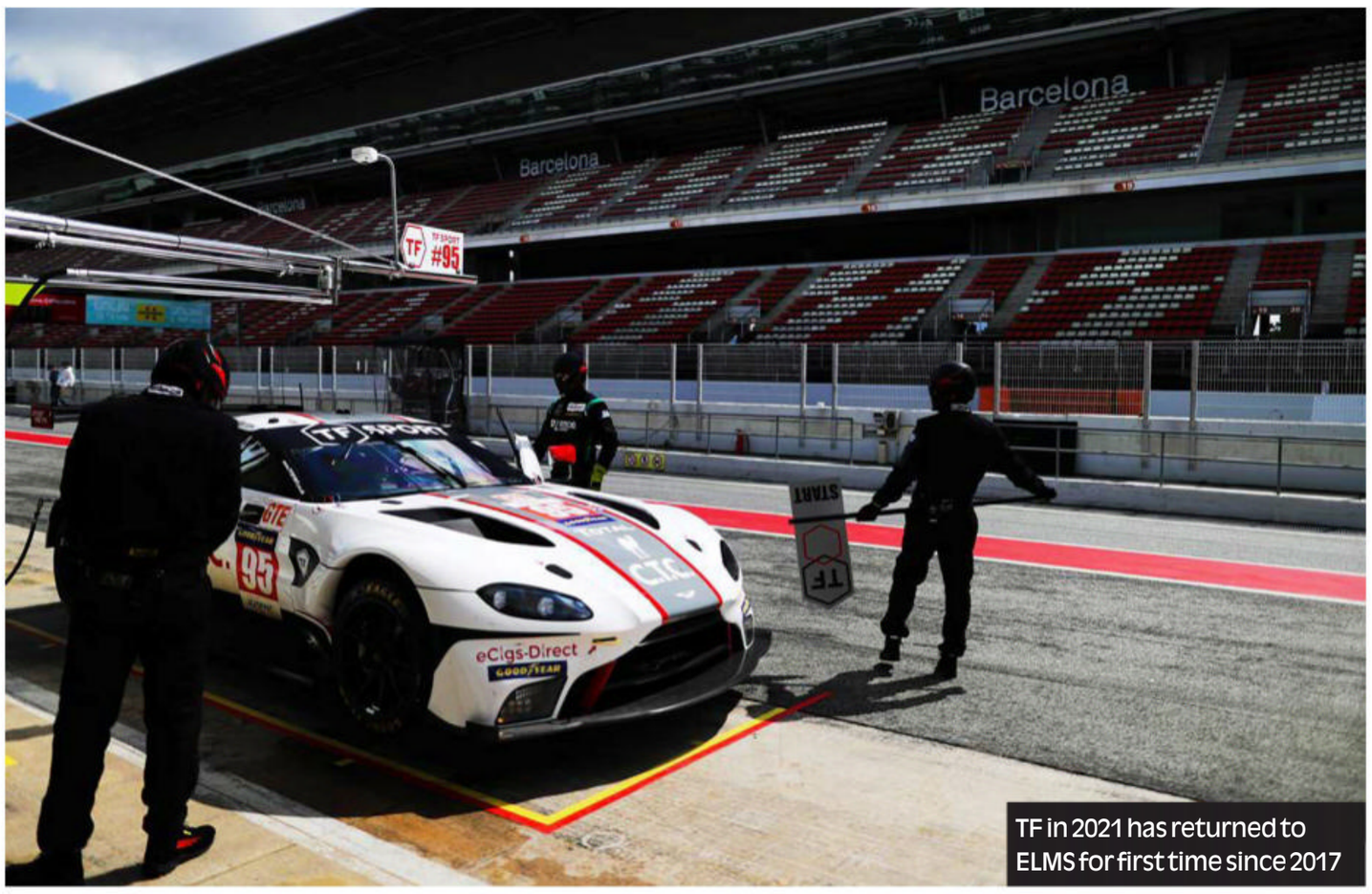
TF moreover also has future full-season IMSA campaigns somewhere in mind. "Be that in GTs or LMP2, we're open to offers to doing it for sure and it's something we'll keep looking at as the years go by," Ferrier confirms.

Things didn't get easier for TF's two-car ALMS effort in February. "It was good, it was very tough," Ferrier says, "the level was very very high in Asian Le Mans. There's 19 cars on the grid, probably 10 of them could have won a race in terms of line-up so it was a good way to get the year started.

"We were a bit unlucky not to get a couple of results, a full-course yellow didn't fall our way in one of the races in Dubai, and we had an accident while we were leading at Abu Dhabi in the first race which was gutting, and the second race we finished fourth just a couple seconds off the podium."

But, as we have discovered, taking the easy option is not TF's way.

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Motorsport Images, Andrew Lofthouse Photography, ELMS



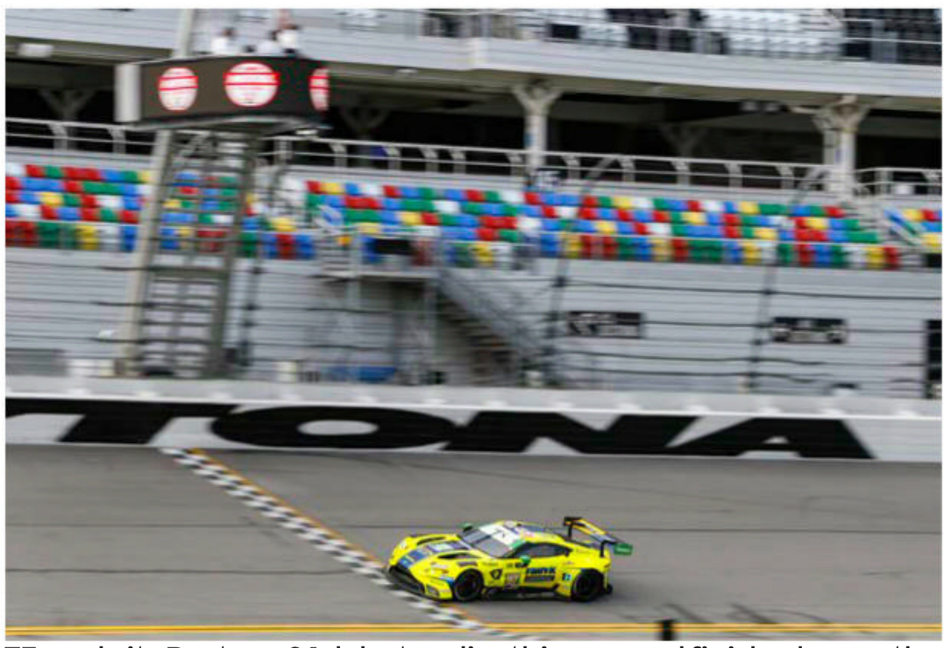
TF in 2021 has returned to ELMS for first time since 2017

This year's Asian Le Mans Series contest was ultra competitive

"An LMP2 car is still a lump of metal with four wheels"

Tom Ferrier

TF Sport in WEC teams up with expanding Japanese D'station outfit



TF made its Daytona 24 debut earlier this year and finished seventh

TF boss Tom Ferrier is looking up

Ferrier: from driver to boss

Tom Ferrier had his sights set on the top of motorsport and, after his successful career in karting, he needed signatures on his national race licence to jump into a Formula Renault car. That is where one of the most enduring friendships – that between him and Team Parker Racing boss Stuart Parker – began.

Ferrier was 17 when he opted to race for Team Parker in a Caterham Roadsport in 1998 to try and bump up his track knowledge and now the pair go up against each other running GT cars on tracks around the globe.

"We had a 1400 Rover-engined car and we took him down to Pembrey at the end of 1998," remembers Parker of that winter race meeting. "Tom and I clicked from day one, he was a very, very good little driver. He did a cracking job and he did a few races with us, and then I went to Little Rissington at the end of that year to watch him win the karting championship he was in."

Parker and Ferrier's routes went in different directions as the driver chased the Formula Renault dream, but the alliance gravitated back towards each other as the years went by. Ferrier had sampled touring cars, but came back to the TPR fold in 2005 in the Seat Cupra championship, having raced in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB the year before, as well as taking on a role as driver coach for Parker in Ginetta Juniors from 2010 onwards.

"We have stayed close, and he is one of the few people from the paddock that I really class as a friend from this game," says Parker. "He was so good at getting the team around him. He was a team player, and understood that you needed your people on board, and he was good at that and he could back it up on the stopwatch."

But shaving tenths of a second off a lap time does not necessarily make a great team manager. Did Parker recognise anything in Ferrier that would hint to his success on the pitwall now?

"Certainly by the time he joined us in Juniors, you could see that he had grown up and he was ready to take the next step," says Parker. "I think he had realised that the dream of being a professional racing driver wasn't going to happen – much like that penny dropped with me – and made the switch remarkably well. Look at what he has created now with TF Sport. It is phenomenal."

So from working so well together on track, the friends are now rivals when it comes to gaining triumphs on the circuit. That is something Parker enjoys. "It is great because you race hard on track and you have a respect off it. It is very healthy, and it is always nice to go racing against good people."

Matt James

Ferrier the driver pushes his Team Parker Racing Seat in 2005

All quiet on the home front

This year as noted will be busy for TF Sport. Yet, incongruously, the team is set for very little on its local, and perhaps most familiar, hunting ground. The British GT championship.

Tom Ferrier told Motorsport News last month there was no guarantee it would be on its grid, due to drivers not able to come up with budget. And Ferrier confirmed last week the team will indeed not chase British GT crowns this year, though may make one-off GT3 appearances.

It's quite the shift for a squad that's bagged the last two British GT4 drivers' and teams' championship doubles as well as GT3's 2019 drivers' crown and 2018 teams' title (its 2020 full-season GT3 effort was canned due to Covid).

Ferrier reckons GT3 replacing the all-Silver-graded Silver Cup class with a Silver-Am category has had an impact. "I can understand what they did with the Silver Class to get rid of it," he tells MN, "but I also think [TF] probably would have had a few cars on the grid if it had remained as a Silver Class. [For] a lot of these GT4 kids it's very tricky to find their next step up. Going straight into GT World Challenge is a bit of a baptism of fire and it's quite a lot of budget."

As for GT4? "It's strange to be honest," Ferrier concedes on that lack of interest, "given we've won it the last two years and when you look at the size of the grid for the last [2020] round at Silverstone.

"It's very hard for teams at the start of the year [to] say 'we are doing this', you have to be flexible to what your customers want to do. You never have quite as clear-cut path as you'd love to have! It's an ever-changing scenario."

TF won't defend its British GT4 crowns

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

WHY THE WORLD TOURING CAR FALSE START RUINED THE POTENTIAL

How tin-top racing's first global contest in 1987 was mired in controversy. By David Addison

First round in Italy was blighted by chaos off-track

It was all going to be A Great Thing. A World Touring Car Championship that would showcase the best European touring car racers plus the Australian scene on some fabulous circuits. In contrast, the single long-distance World Touring Car Championship season in 1987 was blighted by acrimony and wrangling.

Rewind to 1981 and the struggling European Touring Car Championship. Manufacturers were scarce, privateers were the backbone and the series was being read the last rites in certain quarters of the media.

For 1982, the touring car scene welcomed Group A, which straight away brought the cars closer to production specification and were adopted by a number of nations including the UK, which allowed national racers to drop into their home round of the ETCC. Grids were massive, so much so the at the Donington 500, a 90-minute non-qualifiers race had to be run the day before the championship race for example.

As Group A boomed, Australia's touring car scene made its way on to global television and the Aussies announced that from 1985 it, too, would run to Group A. That allowed the likes of Allan Grice and Peter Brock to run a part season in '86 bringing their Holden Commodores to selected ETCC rounds, Grice leading at Monza and Hockenheim and Brock's Mobil-backed Commodores winning the King's Cup at Spa.

Everything in the garden was rosy. Except….

In the background, Ford and BMW were planning new cars that were set to push the boundaries and FISA, motorsport's governing body, had handed over commercial rights to Bernie Ecclestone. Straight away, the touring car paddock felt uneasy.

After all, here was someone focused on F1 not touring cars, and any manufacturers with money to spend were being courted towards F1. Still, the happy band of touring car teams prepared for the season to come.

The promised big-name sponsor never arrived and the calendar was late being published, but the first major knock came on the eve of the first race: Ecclestone levied a registration fee of $60,000 for teams to score points and prize money. That is the equivalent of $139,899 today, or £102,000.

Many of the teams blanched at the idea, one notable being Tom Walkinshaw, who pulled his Holden team out of the championship. Others elected to race on and not score points, some like Rudi Eggenberger had factory support so passed the bill upstairs while the likes of Andy Rouse had to grin and bear it.

So it was a beleaguered field that arrived at Monza where things were no better. The Italian scrutineers threw out the Eggenberger Ford Sierra Cosworths as they had been homologated with a Marelli-Weber engine management system but arrived with a Bosch unit.

Rouse used a Zytek unit but had the gumption to put a Weber sticker over the offending logo… as it was, his car blew a headgasket and retired. With the factory Fords sidelined, it became a lockout for the new BMW M3, the pocket rocket inspired by motorsport boss Paul Rosche.

Riccardo Patrese and Johnny Cecotto took the win for CiBiEmme Sport, but hours after the race came more controversy. The scrutineers returned. Somehow, they had got wind of the difference in roof thickness between a Hungarian team's car (converted from a road car) and the BMW Motorsport-provided cars. Their roof panelling was deemed to be too thin, and hence the first six cars were all excluded. That promoted the Holden Commodore of Allan Moffat and John Harvey to inherit the history-making win, but the Aussies hadn't paid the $60,000 registration fee meaning that the first points-scoring car was the Alfa Romeo 75 of Marcello Cipriani and Walter Voulaz. It had crossed the line 14th, eight laps adrift of the Cecotto/Patrese BMW! It hardly helped the series start in the best light.

From then, the championship battled on, the stalwarts making the best of it. They complained that there was little to show for the $60,000 fee other than a logo as promotion and television coverage was negligible. The second race at Jarama fell to Roberto Ravaglia/Emanuele Pirro (Schnitzer BMW M3) while CiBiEmme took a win at Dijon when a downpour halted the race early and at just the right time for Gianfranco Brancatelli and Johnny Cecotto.

For the Nurburgring round, Eggenberger had 16-inch front wheels and 17-inch rears, meaning that the understeer that had blighted the flame-spitting Fords was gone. Finally the maiden win came as Klaus Ludwig and Klaus Niedzwiedz led home Pirro and Ravaglia. Spa was all about reliability and, with a 70-strong field, the championship looked strong. It was a BMW win as local heroes Didier Theys, Eric van de Poele and Jean-Michel Martin outlasted the rest, while the top points scorer of the WTCC registered runners was the similar car of Luis Perez Sala, Winfried Vogt and Olivier Grouillard.

Brno was a Ford venue and the Ludwig/Niedzwiedz Sierra won again, this time on the debut of the evolution car, the RS500. It had more spoilers, a bigger turbo and a bigger intercooler and was the class of the field, but that power left it impotent in the rain at Silverstone. It was really a broken alternator that cost the German drivers a win as they lost six laps, but proof of how weird a championship season the WTCC had been was encapsulated in that Silverstone race.

Grouillard had rolled his Bigazzi BMW M3 in qualifying and it looked unlikely to start the race. A great effort from the Italian

> **"The racing in these cars was great"**
>
> **Gabriele Tarquini**

Moffat's Holden in rain in Belgium

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com, Motorsport Images

Brit Steve Soper leads the field way at the Nurburgring in July

Ludwig and Niedzwiedz took four victories throughout the season

Champion Roberto Ravaglia (second from the left) and the phalanx of BMW's tin-top stars in 1987

team put it on to the grid and co-driver Luis Sala led on to the penultimate lap… only to hit a puddle and waltz into the gravel. Through to win came the CiBiEmme M3 of Enzo Calderari and Fabio Mancini, which in turn wasn't registered for points, those going to the second-placed BeeEmm of Pirro/Ravaglia.

The bedraggled folk in the paddock looked to sunnier places to round out the season, already fearing the axe was ready to fall on the championship.

In October, two worlds collided: the cream of European touring car racing arrived at Mount Panorama in Bathurst ready to show who was boss, but the Aussies had other ideas. It was a stellar entry list and the race turned out to have everything.

It began with the Australian officials making their mark, preventing advertising on the roofs of the car for example, but once that hurdle was overcome, the Eggenberger Fords were the cars to beat. Ludwig qualified on pole and it and the sister car of Steve Soper and Pierre Dieudonne dominated the race.

The Confederation of Australian Motor Sport (CAMS) officials working with the Australian Racing Drivers' Club (ARDC) that had the rights to Bathurst insisted on doing things their way so the race was the only round of the WTCC that season to run from a standing start and their interpretation of pace car regulations (the term safety car wasn't thought of back then…) was somewhat different from how it was in Europe. But it wasn't overtaking behind the pace car that was exercising some, rather the weather as a huge storm hit the circuit, high winds bending the trees and the amount of rain causing mayhem at the top of the mountain.

For a time, some thought it was a passing shower and there is no more captivating touring car footage than Glenn Seton's onboard from his Nissan Skyline as the switch-like power comes in as he fights the car on slicks. Little ever made the outstanding Australian commentator Mike Raymond go silent, but this heart-in-mouth vision assuredly did.

Rain over, rumblings came from the pitlane of discrepancies in the fuel used by Eggenberger. Channel 7's enthusiastic pit reporter quoted an official source as saying that the fuel sample blew the gauge "off the clock" and then came word of a protest by Frank Gardner (running the local JPS BMW team) over the dimensions of the Eggenberger Ford's wheelarches.

So, the Aussie fans quickly twigged that these efficient Swiss-run machines might not be the winners after all, and who was this in third behind them? Peter Brock. The fan favourite, out of favour with Holden, had put together a two-car private effort and although his own car broke an engine, he had transferred to the second car with David Parsons and Peter McLeod and they took third.

The Sierras were thrown out for the fuel irregularity, reinstated and then thrown out again for the wheelarch saga meaning weeks later Brock was confirmed as the winner. It was another sour taste for a championship that was supposed to be the pinnacle of touring car racing. The top WTCC points scorer was the seventh-placed BMW of Brancatelli and Cecotto.

At Calder a week later, no-one seemed to care about the Sierra's wheelarches and Soper and Dieudonne were the winners with Ludwig and Niedzwiedz winning in Wellington and in the season finale in Fuji which was held days after the Bathurst exclusion was confirmed. That meant that after points were deducted, Roberto Ravaglia took the championship title and the WTCC disappeared, the European championship becoming the premier title in 1988. Indeed, a paltry ETCC had continued in 1987, Vogt winning the championship.

It would be wrong to say that the season was a total disaster. There was some great racing, entries in the main were big and there was a great mix of drivers, even then the likes of BMW using it to assess and promote junior talent. Gabriele Tarquini dabbled in it for Alfa Romeo in a 75 in his final season of F3000. "I had no idea about saloon car. I said to myself 'This must be a very good opportunity also for me to race and discover a new category'. I started the first race without testing, I jumped in the car and my driving style was not the proper one because I never driven a saloon car before. The car itself was not fun to drive because it was not powerful. But the racing was great."

There were the cars as well. The Ford Sierra RS500s and BMW M3s were new and exciting but the Alfa Romeo 75, Holden Commodores, both Australian and the newer shape run by Tom Walkinshaw, added variety as did the Maserati BiTurbo and Toyota Supras. There was scope in the classes as well, with Chris Hodgetts dovetailing a season on the world stage with assorted paying co-drivers with a second BTCC assault, winning the British championship outright.

With few manufacturers willing to pay the registration fee and complaints over promotion and TV coverage, the series was axed after one season. The ETCC battled on but as Super Touring regulations boomed, domestic championships became the focus for manufacturers and equally those cars were for sprint races, not endurance.

The WTCC could, and should, have been so much better. ■

More variety was provided by Alfa

Tom Walkinshaw withdrew his Holden from Monza after entry rows

TALE OF THE TAPE

The 1987 season

The race winners listed weren't always the first over the line, but these are the entries that took maximum points among the World Touring Car Championship battlers

WHEN	WHERE	WTCC WINNERS (CAR)
March 22	Monza 500	Walter Voulaz/Marcello Cipriani (Alfa Romeo 75)
April 19	Jarama 4 Hours	Emanuele Pirro/Roberto Ravaglia (BMW M3)
May 10	Burgundy 500, Dijon	Gianfranco Brancatelli/Johnny Cecotto (BMW M3)
July 12	Nurburgring Touring Car Grand Prix	Klaus Ludwig/Klaus Niedzwiedz (Ford Sierra RS Cosworth)
August 1-2	Spa 24 Hours	Luis Perez Sala/Olivier Grouillard/Winfried Vogt (BMW M3)
August 16	Grand Prix Brno	Klaus Ludwig/Klaus Niedzwiedz (Ford Sierra RS500)
September 6	RAC Trophy, Silverstone	Emanuele Pirro/Roberto Ravaglia (BMW M3)
October 4	Bathurst 1000	Gianfranco Brancatelli/Johnny Cecotto (BMW M3)
October 11	Cadler Park 500	Steve Soper/Pierre Dieudonne (Ford Sierra RS500)
October 26	Wellington 500	Klaus Ludwig/Klaus Niedzwiedz (Ford Sierra RS500)
November 15	Fuji 500	Klaus Ludwig/Klaus Niedzwiedz (Ford Sierra RS500)

Points (after 11 rounds)

POS	DRIVER	PTS
1	Roberto Ravaglia (ITA)	269
2	Klaus Ludwig (GER)	268
2	Klaus Niedzwiedz (GER)	268
4	Emanuele Pirro (ITA)	244
5	Pierre Dieudonne (BEL)	193
5	Steve Soper (GBR)	193
7	Olivier Grouillard (FRA)	164
8	Johnny Cecotto (VEN)	158
8	Gianfranco Brancatelli (ITA)	158
10	Roland Ratzenberger (AUT)	146

Maserati took the BiTurbo grid

RACING REPORTS

Photos: Steve Jones

SNETTERTON: HSCC BY MARCUS PYE — APRIL 17-18

Jackson won in Formula Ford and Formula Junior

RACE WINNERS

Classic F3
Race 1: Andy Smith (March-Toyota 783); **Race 2:** Benn Tilley (March-Toyota 743)

Historic FF1600
Races 1&2: Cam Jackson (Winkelmann WDF2)

Classic FF1600
Races 1&2: Cam Jackson (Winkelmann WDF2)

Historic Formula Junior
Cam Jackson (Brabham BT2)

Historic FF2000
Races 1&2: Benn Simms (Reynard SF77)

Historic Road Sports
John Davison (Lotus Elan S1)

70s Road Sports
William Plant (Morgan Plus 8)

Historic Touring Cars
Races 1&2: Dan Williamson (Ford Falcon)

Classic Clubmans
Race 1: Mark Charteris (Mallock Mk20/21); **Race 2:** Adrian Holey (Mallock Mk20)

Heritage FF1600
Races 1&2: Max Esterson (Ray GR18)

Ecurie Classic Racing
Allan Ross-Jones (Triumph TR4)

80s Production Challenge
Chris Dear (Peugeot 205 GTi)

JACKSON TAKES FIVE VICTORIES IN A SNETTERTON ROUT

Williamson wrestled his Falcon to a brace of triumphs

On a sunny but chilly HSCC season-opening day when polesitters won the first eight races on Snetterton's 300 circuit, Benn Tilley bucked the trend with an epic Classic F3 victory over Andy Smith in the finale.

Maintaining his Donington form, Smith decimated the lap record first time out. Then he changed his March 783's suspension settings, which hobbled its traction.

Despite a tardy getaway, defending champion Tilley (ex-Brian Henton/Rupert Keegan March 743) boldly deposed Anthony Hancock (Lola T670) for the lead into Riches on lap two. Smith pulled an identical move to go second next time round and closed in, but 21-year-old Tilley brilliantly withstood everything thrown at him. "That was a real race! I was quicker off the corners and made sure he couldn't get to the apexes," Tilley said.

Cam Jackson won five from five with Neil Fowler Motorsport, landing Classic and Historic FF1600 doubles in his 1971 Winkelmann and the Formula Junior salvo in his Brabham BT2. Young Henry Chart (Van Diemen RF81) pushed Jackson hard among the Classics, finishing 0.184 seconds behind on their second outing.

Jackson outran Linton Stutely (Royale RP3) and Tom McArthur (Titan Mk4) in the Historic FF rollouts. His only scare came in FJunior in which he hit oil at Coram, but survived a trip across the grass. It barely dented his massive lead over Lotus men Nick Fennell (22) and Adrian Russell (22). Ray Mallock (U2 Mk2) dominated the front-engined split.

Benn Simms twice tore clear of a superb Historic FF2000 pack, beating Graham Fennymore and Greg Robertson. Forty two years after winning the Euroseries title in one, Adrian Reynard ran as high as third in the opener as his Reynard SF79 designs ruled.

The HSCC Road Sports races provided action aplenty. Paul Tooms burst through to lead the Historic set before fellow Lotus Elan driver John Davison regained control. Peter Garland's Morgan +8 was suppressed to third, but there was no stopping the later examples of Will and Richard Plant in the '70s round, in which triple champ Jeremy Clark's Elan's engine blew.

Of the grids that joined on Sunday, Dan Williamson and American Max Esterson landed Historic Touring Car and Heritage Formula Ford doubles respectively. Allan Ross-Jones was uncatchable in the Ecurie Classic Series enduro and Chris Dear repassed Jason Wood (Vauxhall Nova) in the first stand-alone '80s Production Challenge event, which drew five entries.

Again the only race not won from pole was the finale, a Classic Clubmans attrition-fest in which early leader Clive Wood (throttle cable) and runaway race one victor Mark Charteris (propshaft) broke, leaving Adrian Holey to score from the back of the grid! Tom Muirhead topped the B-sport class after earlier winner Tom Eustace retired with a misfire.

CADWELL PARK: 750MC BY CARL McKELLAR — APRIL 17

HARRIDGE STARTS HIS SEASON IN FINE STYLE

James Harridge got the defence of his 750MC Formula Vee crown off to a perfect start by winning both opening rounds of 2021 at Cadwell Park, although neither victory was straightforward.

In race one, title-winner Craig Pollard was leading until tangling with another driver he was lapping late on. This let Harridge, who'd been pressuring him, through for the win.

Harridge fell to fifth at the start of race two but quickly fought back to catch and pass Pollard for second and then passed another champ, Daniel Hands, for the lead.

As in race one, Hands fell away from the lead battle with a sticking throttle, leaving Pollard to take up the chase of Harridge. But Harridge stood firm to take another win.

Oly Waind was a double winner in Clio 182s. Jack Dwayne led both races until Wainds made his move in the closing stages.

Alistair Camp was equally supreme in the Hot Hatch encounters. In the first he passed early leader Ryan Polley for the win as Philip Wright took second. In the second Camp grabbed the lead immediately and dominated thereafter.

European FF1600 champion John Village returned to his Historic 750 Formula roots for the first time since 1975 and promptly won in his newly built JV machine – his first-ever victory at Cadwell.

Photos: Steve Jones

Harridge had to work hard for Formula Vee double

Legend Village took his first Cadwell Park win ever

This came in race two after Richard Prior's JGS won earlier in the day, but not before Village had led the opening laps on his car's debut.

Aaron Cooke and Paul Cook were the winners of two fraught Toyota MR2 races. The second had been going the way of Shaun Traynor until he had a brush with the barriers late on. An attempt to run a third race was abandoned following a multiple pile-up seconds after the start.

Nick Starkey won the first Allcomers race by just 0.03 seconds as Des Shelton's BMW bore down on his Caterham in the run to the line. Shelton won later in the day with ease.

RACE WINNERS

Allcomers
Race 1: Nigel Starkey (Caterham R300); **Race 2:** Del Shelton (BMW E36 M3)

Toyota MR2s
Race 1: Aaron Cooke (Roadster); **Race 2:** Paul Cook (Mk2)

Historic 750 Formula
Race 1: Richard Prior (JGS III); **Race 2:** John Village (JV2)

Hot Hatches
Race 1&2: Alistair Camp (Honda Civic);

Formula Vees
Race 1&2: James Harridge

Clio 182s
Race 1&2: Oly Waind

VSCC: SILVERSTONE BY ROB HANSFORD — APRIL 17

LOCKIE PULLS OUT THE STOPS TO CHARGE FROM BACK TO THE FRONT AT SILVERSTONE

It was a great day for Calum Lockie at the Vintage Sports-Car Club Spring Start as he came from the back of the grid to win the Fox & Nicholl Trophy Race.

Lockie started from the rear of the grid due to being a reserve, but that didn't deter the Delahaye 135MS driver. He stormed through the pack, getting up to second by lap four. He then closed down leader Christopher Mann and passed him for the lead on lap 11 of 12, before Mann retired due to an issue with his Alfa Romeo Monza, promoting Richard Pilkington (Talbot T26 SS) to second.

There was also a brilliant fight for the win in the Vintage, Pre-war, and Pre-1961 car race between the Kurtis Indy-Roadster of Frederick Harper and the Ferrari 246 of Richard Wilson. The pair tussled with each other for the majority of the race before Wilson spun his Ferrari while leading, allowing Harper through. And while Wilson was able to close the gap back down to less than three tenths of a second, he ran out of time to make a move for the win and had to settle for second.

Bernardo Hartogs took a straightforward lights-to-flag victory in the FiSCAR & VSCC Hawthorn International Trophy race in his Lotus XV, beating the HWM shared by Martin Hunt and Patrick Blakeney-Edwards, while George Shackleton (Cooper Mk XI) won both Formula 3 500s Owners Association races from pole position, finishing ahead of Chris Wilson on both occasions.

RACE WINNERS

VSCC Specials
Robin Tuluie (Riley Menasco Pirate)

500cc Formula 3
Race 1&2: George Shackleton (Cooper MkXI)

Vintage, Pre-War and Pre-1961
Frederick Harper (Kurtis Indy Roadster)

Handicap for Pre-War cars
Race 1: Wilfred Cawley (Austin 7 Special); **Race 2:** Ben Maeers (GN Parker)

HGPCA race for Pre-1966 cars
Barry Cannell (Brabham BT11A)

Fox & Nicholl Trophy
Calum Lockie (Delahaye 135MS)

FiSCAR/VSCC Hawthorn International Trophy
Bernardo Hartogs (Lotus 15)

Allcomers Scratch
Julian Wilton (ERA R7B)

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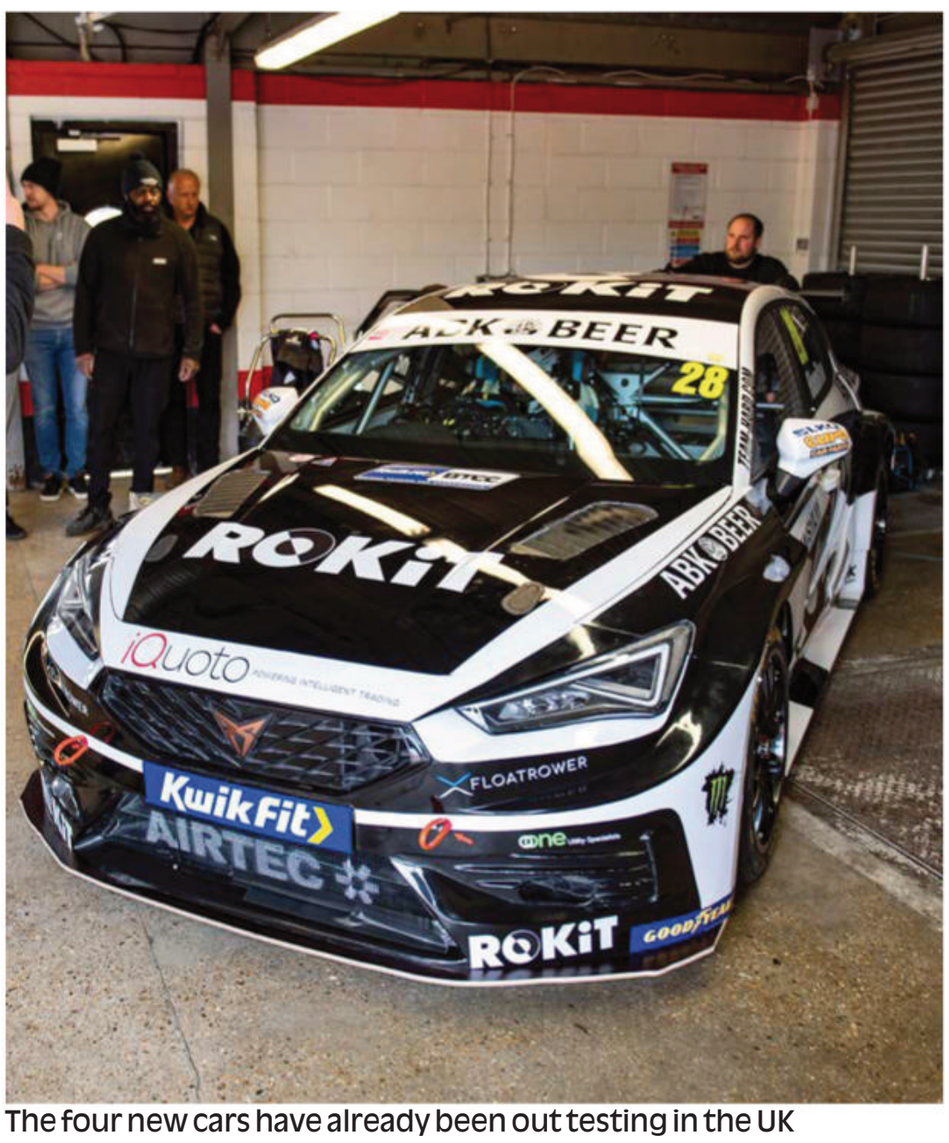
FEATURE

WHY TEAM HARD IS AIMING HIGH WITH ALL-NEW CUPRA TOURING CAR ATTACK

Matt James finds out that it is all change for the Kent squad for the BTCC in 2021

Test miles have already shown the promise



The four new cars have already been out testing in the UK

Among the driver swaps and team ownership handovers, the British Touring Car Championship's down-season has presented headlines on almost a weekly basis. But quietly in Kent, Team Hard has got on with its own business.

In its 30,000 square foot premises on Detling Aerodrome, it has put together its fresh plan for the 2021 season and it is a huge step forward for the squad, which will be 10 years on from its first entry into the tin-top top-flight under the Tony Gilham Racing guise.

The reason 2021 will be a big one is that the team has swapped its ageing and long-serving VW CCs – which would have been entering their final season as homologated BTCC racers this year anyway – and has built up four brand-new Cupra R machines.

The hatchbacks will be driven by Jack Goff, Aron Taylor-Smith, Glynn Geddie and Nic Hamilton this term. And all of this will be operated alongside Team Hard's myriad programmes in championships such as the Porsche Carrera Cup GB, Ginetta Supercup and Juniors, Mini Challenge and a host of other categories. The team has been mainstay of one-make VW racing over the last decade and has even has an interest in truck racing.

But that is only part of the journey that Team Hard has been on over the winter. It has also formed an alliance with the Laser Tools Racing squad, which ran Ash Sutton to last year's title in an Infiniti. The Japanese machines of Sutton and Aiden Moffat, plus an extra one for Carl Boardley, will be run alongside the Cupras in a deal which means that the commercial interests of all seven cars will be operated under the same umbrella. That underpins the potential of all of the entries from the cooperative, but the Cupra Rs are Team Hard's new babies.

Team Hard had switched from Toyota Avensis to the German saloons in 2017, but the VW CCs were already the grandfathers of the NGTC-spec cars at that stage. Fast-forward to 2020 and they were ready for a pension.

Having one more year with the VWs in 2021 might have seemed like the easiest option, because the BTCC is due to undergo its hybrid revolution in 2022 with new systems applied to all the machines on the grid. But Tony Gilham was convinced that Team Hard needed to be ahead of the curve.

It was a rainy and metal-crunching weekend in Cheshire in August last year that really persuaded Gilham to press the go button with a new programme. In the final race of the weekend at Oulton Park, both Hamilton and Ollie Brown smote the barriers at Druids and that put even more pressure on what was already a highly compressed 2020 schedule.

Gilham explains: "That was a real low point which triggered these plans for a new car. We lost two cars there at the same corner...We went on to Knockhill [the next round just one week later] with one VW CC and one BMW to run, and two other CCs smashed to pieces. It was then we knew we had to have a real rethink.

"Having the VWs for another season would have taken us right up to the cusp of the hybrid era so it would have worked but, as it has played out, we have gone a year early."

The thought process behind which new model to operate wasn't a massive leap. With Team Hard's championship success in the VW Racing Cup in its record books and VWs already in its workshop, a product from the Volkswagen Audi Group was on the wish list.

Gilham says: "We were pushing down the road of looking at what Volkswagens might suit the British Touring Car Championship: we were looking closely at the Golf Mk8 and other products around the VAG group. It was a good fit.

"At that particular time when we were looking around, Cupra – which is essentially the performance arm of Seat, like AMG is to Mercedes – was investing massively in a rebrand. The guys heading up their marketing are doing a really good job and it fit really well with us.

"We see it as the perfect platform, and the amount of exposure we will get from that will be strong too. But even more than that, when you look at the chassis, it is nearly perfect for the BTCC. It is pretty similar to the Focus, which has been a race-winning car in touring cars, so that makes sense."

The dream for any outfit on the BTCC grid is to become an official factory team,

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Steve Hindle, Gary Hawkins

Team Hard has big ambitions with its new British Touring Car build at its headquarters in Kent

Goff took Team Hard's only BTCC win at Silverstone '19

There will be four examples of the hatchback on the 2021 BTCC grid

Aron Taylor-Smith will return to the touring car line-up for 2021

Oulton Park last season was a turning point for Team Hard's VW CCs

and Gilham says that is in Team Hard's thinking, but he also has a slice of realism which means he knows that the operation needs to prove itself and the new kit in 2021 before any stronger links might be in the offing.

"Cupra UK have approved the whole branding and they have approved the look of the car – and we launched it in one of their dealerships, so we have a very good working relationship with them," says Gilham. "We are putting ourselves in the shop window because it will be no surprise that we are chasing a works-backed deal, but we know this is a results-driven business. Historically, we haven't got the results to shout about yet, so it is understandable that Cupra weren't just going to go 'bang, there you go, there is a factory deal'.

"So we have invested massively in the cars ourselves and we are speculating to accumulate, if you like. We are going for it in a big way. If we get results this year, and I truly think we will, then I would like to think that we have a good shot at being in with a chance of a works deal. That would be perfect timing because that is when the hybrid systems come onboard for the BTCC, and Cupra are already launching their hybrid models. They are going full electric beyond that. We are in communication with them all the time. There are no promises, but if we are out there and at the sharp end and getting great coverage, then why wouldn't they want to be involved?"

The new cars have already taken to the track with a shakedown and early test at Brands, before another day at Donington Park. Further running is planned ahead of today's official BTCC media test session at Silverstone.

One of the assets that Team Hard has in the bank is Goff. The five-time BTCC race winner pulled off a dream victory for Team Hard at Silverstone in 2019 in the reversed-grid race, and he has been right in at the ground floor of the entire Cupra R programme. After making his BTCC debut with the team in 2013, he rejoined in 2019 and has a good feel for the team and its capabilities.

Goff, 30, explains: "I was involved right from the starting point of the discussion about what car we were going to use for 2021. The Cupra R has a nice, short wheelbase and the overhangs are compact. It ticks all the boxes for us, and I was keen to push that because it fits well, and there is also a good link with what Cupra is going to do with its road cars and hybrid power.

"We all bounced ideas off each other during the creation of the car. When the rollcage was being built, I had an input into where the seating position was and how the steering column was angled, things like that."

And that build process has taken into account the tweaks that will be needed to adapt to the hybrid era as well as is happening at the same time as Team Hard galvanising the infrastructure behind the team. There are new trucks, tools, staff and a fresh impetus behind the revamped programme for 2021.

Gilham says the investment behind the scenes has helped to future proof the squad for years to come. "We have gone from having the oldest car on the grid to having the newest car on the grid and, for the first time ever, being ahead of the game in terms of the fact we are partly ready for the year after," he explains. "We have left no stone unturned in terms of chasing performance. We have gone all out."

The ever-enthusiastic Gilham has targeted top 10s and even a podium straight away when the championship finally gets going at Thruxton on May 8-9. That might seem like an ambitious aim for a team that managed a best result of 11th last season with Goff at Brands Hatch, but the team boss does have a measure of realism too.

"We need to aim for the top because we feel we have something that is as good, if not better, than anyone else out there," says Gilham. "We now feel that we have got everything to take the fight to anyone on the grid. But, at the same time, we have to keep our feet on the ground.

"We have been happy with testing, but we are not going to get ahead of ourselves because we know it is a very competitive series. We just want to be on the pace out of the blocks. Where that will exactly be, we don't know because you can throw a blanket over the top 10 on a BTCC grid."

Goff is aware, even after that initial mileage, that the Cupra R is already doing the things he is asking it to, but the driver too is trying not to get carried away in terms of his objectives for the 30-race campaign ahead.

"I can already tell that the car is far better than the CC!" he laughs. "The initial thing that I noticed was its high-speed stability. It is superb, and that is going to be very useful being as the first round is at Thruxton.

"We are working on how we use the kerbs, but that is something I think we are getting closer on and the biggest thing, for me, is that it reacts to changes. That is something we never had in the VW CC for the last two years: you could throw any set-up at that car, and not a lot would change.

"We are starting with a blank canvas and we have a few little ideas that we are applying to it. We try some things that do work and some that don't. But we are full of confidence, although I have been around long enough to know that you aren't sure where you stand until it kicks off. I am keeping my feet on the ground and trying hard to keep Tony's feet on the ground too, which is not easy."

The overriding message from the new programme is that Team Hard is planning with a longer-term view than perhaps it ever has done beforehand. All of its BTCC drivers are on multi-year deals and, in the toughest of times, it has given itself a head start into the next generation for the BTCC.

Goff explains: "The whole project is a massive testament to Tony and everyone at Team Hard. We are in the middle of a global pandemic, and they have built up four new cars. It is a huge job to take this project on and he's not just building one car, he is building a fleet of them.

"Tony is ambitious, but this project has not just been thrown together to hope for the best. There are decent people involved and Tony has brought them all together.

"As much as anything, the BTCC is a people sport, and we have those people now. You can have all the money in the world, but if you have some muppet bolting it all together, it is never going to work. We have the right people in situ and we are in a good place." ■

Gilham is excited about 2021

"Team Hard is now ready for the long term"

Tony Gilham

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

COLUMNIST

MATT JAMES

MN's editor is looking forward to the BTCC's first day at school in 2021

Photos: Motorsport Images, Jakob Ebrey

The BTCC grid enjoys the media day testing

Grid in 2000 fell down to only three works teams

Engineers will often moan about controlled parts. Mandated bits of kit from a championship organiser certainly can help to reduce costs of actually running a car, but they are the stuff of nightmares for those with a creative mind who are looking to steal a march on the on-track opposition by out-thinking their rivals.

The British Touring Car Championship's current NGTC regulations have a raft of stipulated parts, and they were introduced in an effort to maintain a healthy entry level. On the evidence of the past decade, it is very clear that they have worked perfectly.

But there is still the perception, perhaps, that some of the engineering challenge has been taken away from the series due to the cost-capped parts.

That might be true, but give an engineer a mile, and he or she will take 10. As soon as that happens, the costs go through the roof, the series becomes unsustainable and you would end up with a crash, much like happened to the British Touring Car Championship grid in the year 2000. While Super Touring class budgets skyrocketed into the millions, the number of entries went down proportionately. It was inevitable.

But complain as they might, the engineering gurus at each of the British Touring Car Championship teams still have a challenge on their hands. And, as if to underline that engineering is still a vital cog in any team's path to success, consider the fact that only three squads have won the teams' championship over the last decade (four for Honda and Team Dynamics, five for WSR and its BMWs and one for the BMR VW CC attack in 2015).

It is clear that the cream still does float to the top of the points tables over the course of 30 races whether limitations are in place on the precise kit that the teams can use or not. And that, in turn, means that the brainpower within the BTCC is as sought-after as the people who step behind the steering wheel to take on the competition. Over the winter is when the grey matter is exercised the most. While the engines might have been turned off, the detailed work gets turned on to find those extra hundredths of a second that make all the difference on the tin-top grid. Limited in-season testing means that the progress made over the winter months is pretty much locked in once the cars take to the Tarmac for the first time. It can be a nervous time as teams look to see if their dedication in the workshop translates into meaningful gains on the stopwatch.

The data has been studied and all the things that were too sizeable to tackle during the season will have been rectified, upgraded and tweaked.

On parade: the teams will get back in the swing

Of course, the only true indicator of which team has done the best over the down season can't be truly judged until all the cars take to the track together, and that will happen for the British Touring Car Championship at Silverstone today (Thursday).

It is like the first day at school as drivers are reunited with their upgraded cars and teams are waking up after some long months away from the pit garages. The cobwebs are going to be shaken off.

There are some fascinating driver swaps this season, some team ownership changes along and the four new cars from Team Hard *(see page 24)*. When you consider the trauma that the global health pandemic has caused over the last 12 months, it seems the British Touring Car Championship has probably weathered the storm even better than can be expected which is a credit to the championship organisers and the enduring appeal of the UK's highest-profile motor racing category.

Whatever the reasons for that, the immediate future all rests on what happens on the circuit and the final positions at the end of the track activity today. There will be some who run new tyres and take out all the success ballast weight to skew the readings a little bit, but dig deeper and it can give some intriguing pointers to the likely pecking order ahead of the season's get-go, which this year will be at Thruxton on May 8-9. Read all about it in Motorsport News next week.

"The BTCC seems to have weathered the storm better than expected"

WHAT'S ON

YOUTUBE

Today (Thursday) would have been the 46th birthday of Greg Moore. The Canadian was taken aged just 24 in an accident at CART's 1999 Fontana season-closer.

Five wins in four CART seasons might not leap out to the uninitiated as much to get fussed about. But you know about lies, damned lies and statistics. Moore was a lost legend of US single-seater racing, and possibly of F1.

Those who witnessed him up close did not doubt it. When his story ended prematurely he was on the cusp of a move to Penske, just as Penske was about to re-establish its CART dominance.And it wasn't all only about Moore the driver. Moore the man was equally legendary.

On YouTube there's a 36-minute round-table discussion from 2019 that marked 20 years since his loss. Present are Moore's rivals Dario Franchitti, Paul Tracy and Max

Rivals look back on Moore

Papis, as well as CART's Mike Zizzo and reporter Marshall Pruett. You can watch it at youtube.com/watch?v=Arl_VOXJeAk or by searching 'Greg Moore At 20'.

Graham Keilloh

TV GUIDE

This weekend the latest instalment of the 2021 World Rally Championship takes place, and it's something new with WRC's first-ever Croatia Rally. If you're otherwise engaged for the live coverage there are highlights after each day's running: on Friday at 2300hrs-2330hrs on BT Sport 3, early Sunday at 0230hrs-0300hrs on BT Sport 2 and finally later on Sunday at 2030hrs-2100hrs on BT Sport 3. You can catch up with the entire rally's highlights on Monday evening at 1900hrs-2000hrs on BT Sport 2, or at various times on Tuesday and Wednesday.

If this weekend's action from IndyCar's St Petersburg round also passes you by there's an hour of highlights on Sky Sports F1 on Tuesday at 2100hrs-2200hrs, which is shown again as we sneak into Wednesday at 0000hrs-0100hrs.

The WRC goes to Croatia

Sky Sports F1 also tomorrow (Friday) offers a couple of chances to binge-watch last year's British GT season. Starting at 1100hrs there's an hour's highlights from each meeting in turn, followed immediately by a season review at 1700hrs-1800hrs. The loop then starts again at 1800hrs.

With the latest World Endurance Spa season-opener creeping towards us Eurosport 2 gets us in the mood with the best of last year's Six Hours of Spa, at 1600hrs-1700hrs on Saturday.

Graham Keilloh

LIVE TV

FORMULA E
VALENCIA EPRIX
CIRCUIT RICARDO TORMO
- **Qualifying 1:** Saturday, 0945hrs-1120hrs, Eurosport 2
- **Race 1:** Saturday, 1330hrs-1530hrs, Eurosport 2
- **Qualifying 2:** Sunday, 0845hrs-1020hrs, Eurosport 1
- **Race 2:** Sunday, 1300hrs-1425hrs, Eurosport 1

INDYCAR
ST PETERSBURG
- **Practice 1:** Friday, 2115hrs-2200hrs, Sky Sports F1
- **Practice 2:** Saturday, 1445hrs-1530hrs, Sky Sports F1
- **Qualifying:** Saturday, 1845hrs-2000hrs, Sky Sports F1
- **Race:** Sunday, 1700hrs-2000hrs, Sky Sports F1

NASCAR
TALLADEGA
- **Race:** Sunday, 1900hrs-2300hrs, Freesports

LISTINGS

SATURDAY

Snetterton, Norfolk
MSVR meeting: Radical Challenge, Radical SR1, Mini Challenge, MSVR Allcomers **Starts** racing from 1125hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs)

Lydden Hill, Kent
CMMC meeting: Multi Marques, 206 GTi Cup, Nippon Challenge, Tricolore Trophy, Classic VW, Deutsche Marques Cup/TT Challenge, Modern Car Series, Classic Car Series, Classic Era Challenge, Pre '64 Sports/GT Series, Super Saloon Series, Tin Tops, Intermarque Silhouette Series **Starts** racing from 1100hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs)

SATURDAY-SUNDAY

Donington Park, Leics
MSVR meeting: Heritage FF1600, EnduroKa, Focus Cup, MSV SuperCup, Racing Saloons, Production Golf and BMW, Z Cars and New Generation BMWs, Elise Trophy, Production GTi **Starts** Saturday, racing from 1105hrs (qualifying from 0905hrs) Sunday, racing from 1150hrs (qualifying from 0905hrs)

Cadwell Park, Lincs
BARC meeting: Legends, Junior Saloons, Hyundai Coupe, MAX5, Mighty Minis, 2CVs **Starts** Saturday, racing from 1310hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) Sunday, racing from 0945hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs)

Silverstone International, Northants
BARC meeting: Britcar, Britcar Trophy, Mini Miglia, Mini Seven, TCR/Touring Car Trophy/VW, Pre '66 Classic Touring Cars, Pre '83 Touring Cars/JEC Jaguar Saloon and GT, Pre '93 Touring Cars/Pre '03 Touring Cars, Blue Oval Saloon Cars/Classic and Historic Thunder Saloons **Starts** Saturday, racing from 1200hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) Sunday, racing from 1020hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs)

Silverstone National, Northants
750MC meeting: BMW Car Club, 116 Trophy, F1000, Alfa Romeo, Ma7da Series, Type R Trophy, Sports 1000, Roadsports, 750 Formula, Sports Specials, Classic Stock Hatch **Starts** Saturday, racing from tba (qualifying from 0900hrs) Sunday, racing from tba (qualifying from 0900hrs)

Brands Hatch, Kent
MGCC meeting: Morgans, MG Trophy, MG Metro Cup, Midget and Sprite, BCV8, MG Trophy, Equipe GTS, Equipe Pre '63, Equipe 50s, Equipe Libre **Starts** Saturday, racing from 1225hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) Sunday, racing from 1225hrs (qualifying from 1000hrs)

Sadly crowds are still not allowed at these race meetings

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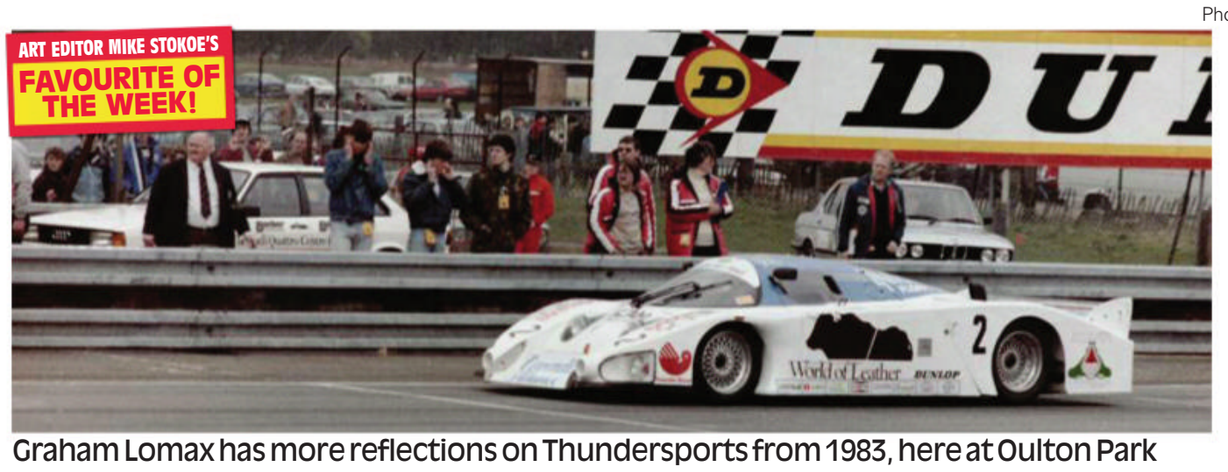

Graham Lomax has more reflections on Thundersports from 1983, here at Oulton Park

Robert Taylor's shot of a Lotus at Goodwood

Brolly good! A near miss from Dean Chilvers

Justin Ward's photo from Murray's at Snett

Ian Baxendale's classic BriSCA F1 reflections

NEXT WEEK — OUT THURSDAY, APRIL 29

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READERS' Q&A

EUGENE DONNELLY

Five-time title winner tackles the MN readers' posers

SPECIAL!
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